TALES FROM A BOY'S FANCY

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TALES FROM A BOY'S FANCY

A VOLUME OF STORIES AND POEMS

—BY—

HARVEY SHAWMEKER

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no. 1.

To the Man in the Moon this Book is most
cold y and distantly dedicated

CONTENTS

Change of Charm 9
Another Ichabod Crane 13
The Drunken Fairy 60
The Passing Goddess 68
The Boy and the Doves 91
In Frozen Armor 99
The Dewdrop and the Sunbeam 119
The Human Hoax 123
A Sunset Idyl 139
The Knight of the Black Garter 147
Mistress Gluppins and the Echo 167
The Eqnity of Nature 178
The Royal Poet and the Muses 182
Old Speck 190
Merely an Incident 241
A Fatal Quest 244
The Land of Might-Have-Been 258
The Second Deluge 260

Address to Luna.....276
The Strange Case of Soloman Trudge.....279
The Haunted House.....290
An Infernal Dream.....292
At the End of the Vista.....300
The Discontented Pebble.....303
The Power of Prayer.....307
A Modern Fable.....309
The Poet's Response.....314
The Shepherd's Request.....317

CHANGE OF CHARM.

I once did look upon the skies,
When I the stars would see;
But now I find my Lady's eyes
Are stars enough for me.

From Hesper, brighest of her kind,
To the dimmest points that burn;
The whole galaxy there I find,
And from them seldom turn,

To view above the heav'nly fold,
So famed in song and story;
Neglected are my youthful haunts
Among the astral glory.

The changing moods that pass within,
Revealing each its story,
These make her face a zodiac,
And make her eyes so starry.

Sometimes she smiles, and when she does,
How brightly gleam her star-eyes!
And then I vow that they outstrip
The glory of the sunrise.

But anger-squalls sometimes o'er-cast,
Then how the sparks are rained!
And sometimes I am even doomed
To view their lustre tear-stained.

And while they may not constant be
As the changeless orbs on high;
Yet still I somehow love their light,
And cannot pass it by.

ANOTHER ICHABOD CRANE.

There dwells in the southeastern part of Missouri a man who is slowly but surely becoming a hermit. He lives alone, except for his domestic animals. At every encounter with man he exhibits more and more repugnance. To quote experience; visitors to his home are given every intimation to make their stay as short as possible, and no invitation to return is extended. He never looks back at any one he meets or passes. That peculiar personal magnetism which determines that look back as often as you like, nine times in ten you will find the other fellow looking at you, does not operate on him. No, though the curse of Sodom and Gomorrah should again fall out of the heavens into his very back yard, he would be thoroughly disinfected against the salification that overtook the unfortunate Lot's wife.

The house in which he lives is a renaissance of the order of architecture instituted by General Charles Lee, of Revolutionary infamy, during his retirement; the most prepossessing characteristic

of which is its economical substitution of chalk-marks on the floor for partitions. The chalk-mark feature in particular is retained by him, though most other people have discarded it as too impalpable.

I visited this individual, and my first impression on seeing him was that, whatever troubles he might have, his tailor and barber bills at least were not burdensome. I was struck by the lack of demarkation between the respective abodes of the solitary human inhabitant, and his feathered and quadrupedal domestics. They seemed all to live together in a great state of social conglomeration, —dogs, cats, and all other animals of a convenient size, seeming to consider the inside of the house as much their side as the outside. Nor did these infringing inferiors seem to recognize the mental walls stretching from the chalk-marks to the ceiling. Doubtless, either the marks were too faint, or their imaginations were not vivid enough.

I talked with this singular gentleman, and the formula of our conversation was about one word of his to ten of mine. He seemed to be thoroughly uninformed and equally unconcerned about everything. I made a distant reference as to the cause for his thus insulating himself from his kind, whereupon, without a word, he took up his hat and knotty cedar staff, and walked forth into the fields, leaving me to the mercy of his familiar domestic retainers. As he had set no date for his return, I, tiring of the efforts of his easy-man-

nered companions, left soon after him; and later, not without some difficulty, collected from the copper-colored natives neighboring round, the following story about him.

His experiences as an anchoret were, I learned, only some five or six years old. Up to that time, he had lived a quiet unassuming life. He had neither the mark of Cain upon him, nor an aureole about his brow, to distinguish him as being particularly either good or bad. He was the son of a prosperous farmer, as doubtless he still is, though an uninitiated observer would never suspicion it. Peter Wilson was his humble addition. He was of a goodly size, with a small spherical head, well thatched with yellow hair; two grey eyes, with no great distance between them. His incipient credentials of manhood consisted of some half dozen clumps of down, clustered about the bases of as many pimples, like atolls. His nose was not quite classically Roman, but was a kind of dog Latin feature. With all the foregoing qualities, he was bashful and awkward as a country hedgehog.

There lived within eyeshot of his father's house a girl named Fanny Embers. She was his exact opposite in everything. Slender, graceful, with two blue eyes, lambent of vivacity, she was beautiful as a fairy, seen at sunset, standing on the drawbridge of an air-castle..

Peter Wilson had courted Fanny Embers for a long, long time, and everybody predicted the usual result. The ecclesiastic horseman, i. e., the circuit rider, looked forward to the ceremony fee

as a powerful reinforcement to his somewhat scanty stipend. Impetuous young ladies, who were hobbled in their desire to make record-breaking time to the altar by more sober-paced sweethearts, intended employing it as an effective incentive to speed. While fast young men, with whom the case was reversed, proposed to use it likewise. Every old lady, at all versed in the necromancy of coffee-grounds, or any other modern medium of divination, had already seen the "happy event," with all the subsequent history of the participants, plainly painted in the prescient sediment on the surfaces of cups and saucers, or by whatever other means the oracle chose to report.

And yet, strange to say, the occasion, thus universally prognosticated hoped for and expected, really never did occur; and from the following story I leave the reader to gather the cause, merely warning him that courting a coquette is in some respects like eating peaches. As in the latter, one often no sooner has his peach nicely peeled, and the anticipative saliva has begun to trickle from all its sources into its general reservoir, the mouth, than slip! through your fingers and into the dust it falls; so, in the former, it frequently happens that one of those queerly-constituted beings called coquettes, no sooner has you jostling your cranium against the stars, than adieu! she reposes in the other fellow's arms, and you stand on the barren brink of despair, with a heart and purse empty as a peanut shell that has spent two minutes in the hands of a small boy. And yet, in the first

as in the last, when no mishap attends, how sweet the result! But perhaps this has nothing to do with the story, which is now overdue.

The sun, a large ruddy coal, was slowly burning its way through the bosky rim of the horizon; whence, it seemed, it would fall into unfathomable oblivion. The birds were singing their farewell notes, in a way to kill all hopes of an encore, until morning—a requiem to the dying day—as Peter Wilson, his left hand clasping his right arm just below the elbow, behind his back, and his head bowed in profound meditation, passed slowly along the leaf-strewn lane for the weekly interview with the turnkey of his happiness.

Arrived at her home, and no one visible, he concludes that, instead of halloaing, he will just walk in, and give her an instance of his impromptu cleverness in a miniature surprise-party, as the doors are invitingly open. He is so well known that the old house-dog makes no complaint.

Peculiar are the feelings of one when he sits unannounced in the home of another, however sure he may be of his welcome. He interprets every sound as the advent of some one, and when real noises are scarce, imagination is not tardy in supplying them. The sounds that reached Peter gave evidence that the family was at supper; so he felt free to attend to some personal matters. First, he settled his celluloid collar, which had begun a tour up the back of his neck, in consequence of a shortage of collar-buttons in the rear, back into place. He next examined his hat, which doubtless before

he started had had its fibers severely tested at least half a dozen times with the brush, for any evasive atom of dust that might yet be lingering, or that might have collected during his walk, on its glistening exterior, noting at the same time that the birds-nest-like depression in the crown of it was made in exact conformity with the rules that govern such matters; for the contour of Peter's head, as you already know, demanded the kind of hat, on the crown of which if one would represent some portion of the earth's surface, the crater of a volcano, and not a longitudinal valley, is the proper caper. Being reassured in these important trifles, Peter, tilted back in his chair, placed his right ankle on his left knee, and having disposed of the troublesome hat in the triangle thus formed, locked his hands behind his head, with an air of being entirely domesticated; and with a look of sangfroid on his face pellucid as a frog's nest, awaited developments.

Presently the fog of pretended indifference with which he had enveloped himself was pierced by the sound of a light airy tread. Peter knew instinctively that it was Fanny, and also that she was coming into the room where he was, and yet he did not move until she stood on the threshhold, and had uttered that little inimitable exclamation of surprise, not "eureka" perhaps. Peter then got down from his craned-up position, with the speed of a cat vacating a pantry immediately after the reception of a boot-jack, and with the gracefulness of a turtle clambering over a log-drift, made his

very best apology of a bow. Fanny blushed away the effect, and said "nice weather." "Yes, to be sure."

And when did two young people, who had anything at all in common, ever meet under other than auspicious skies? And when did they ever fail to mention the fact? And yet, we have conversational epicures who consider it the very acme of indecorum for any one to mention the weather at all. But for my part, I consider it only a crime of small magnitude for one occasionally to mention a subject which so closely affects him, and upon which, of all subjects, he is most apt to be well informed. Especially is this venial if a violent change has just occurred, and you are in mortal terror that your friend has not noticed it and feel it your bounden duty to let him into the secret.

But it is no intention of mine to stake out the limits of conversation. Too many already have painfully done so, only to see their accurate surveys either completely disregarded by cool, calm, calculating masculine perversity; or utterly submerged, inundated, by irresistible floods of unthinking feminine loquacity. Indeed, I do not even intend to play the amanuensis for my own worthy characters; but for a few hours I shall leave them to whisper, ogle, giggle, pout, or do whatever else the Diminutive Divinity may decently dictate.

Much would I like to tell you what they said and did; but as no record of this interesting interview exists, as the participants have wrapped themselves in folds of silence impervious to all inquiry,

as I am proverbed against playing the eaves-dropper, and as any of my following of the dotted lines of imagination would doubtless swerve sadly, I fear you must remain in Egyptian darkness. Of all tasks, reporting a Cupid-conference between a pair of Missourian enamoratas is the one for which I am least fitted. I have not the steady beacon of experience to guide me; hence, I can say nothing about the truth. Concerning the prolific themes which inspire the almost interminable confabulations that precede the nuptials, which transmute every moment of what would otherwise be golden silence, into a kind of german silver speech, which fill the mail-bags too full to be locked, when the affected parties are too far apart to communicate conveniently by word of mouth; in short, which glut all mediums of converse, and show themselves ready to be tapped at any time, often to the annoyance of parents, guardians, teachers, chaperons, rivals, and the general public, I have a most profound and comprehensive ignorance.

It seems that through this means all mysteries should be cleared up. The identity of the "Man in the Iron Mask" should become as well known as that of Dumas himself. Some regular vocation should be found for the spleen and the long vacation of that organ should come to a speedy close. The iris of the soap-bubble should be obliged to explain its origin. The ultimate fate of Sir Hendrick Hudson should be revealed; and the "Skeleton in Armour" made to give a more authentic account of itself. In fine, each component phase of

every brain-baffling question should stand forth in a noon-gush of intelligence. But as I have heard of no such victories from the quarter indicated, which might be used as a guy for a towering imaginative reproduction, and as I have described the impossibilities, moral and physical, of giving you the original, these two facts must form my apology for requesting you to sit on the doorstep until I can resume the narrative as it was told to me.

The old clock gave the time as half past ten. Fanny was in the midst of an absorbing story. Peter's face wore a look of uneasiness, but it was not caused by the story. In fact, I doubt if he were paying much heed to his fair entertainer. The truth is, he felt, deep down in his "heart of hearts," that the time had come for saying good-night, which, after some few dozen repetitions, would be the preamble to adjournment. And even then he was trying to think of some prefatory sentence to slope the way to this ordeal. He had no sooner found it, and cleared his face, than, oh wonder of wonders! Fanny, bisecting her story, with graceful celerity, *took each of Peter Wilson's hands in her own, and laid her head softly against his breast!*

Are you equal to the occasion? Are you in need of mental gymnastics? If so, you will find excellent practice in trying to fancy the feelings of Peter at this unprecedented conduct. Of course, to only too many of all stations it would have been nothing. But to Peter, who had had scarcely any ex-

perience with the opposite sex, it was much. His face flamed, and yet there seemed to be enough blood in it to quench a burning city. My! what a dearth of blood there must be on the inside, when it is thus summoned to the surface! Blazing icicles seemed to be chasing each other up and down his spine. He trembled violently, and came near falling over. And I have not the slightest doubt that if the small cotton-bales in the toes of his shoes, placed there to prevent the vacancy acquiring a sunken, sepulchral appearance, had been examined, they would have been found to be full of corpuscles, forced through the pores of the skin.

For some minutes he could not look at her, and when at last his scattered senses had collected sufficiently for him to do so, miracle of miracles! Fanny either was, or was superbly feigning to be, fast asleep as an innocent weasel. Yes, the four rows of fringe on the curtains of her eyes were merged into two, and her bosom rose and fell with the regularity of healthful slumber. To try to describe the feelings of Peter Wilson at this discovery would simply be to court ridicule by attempting impossibilities. Doubtless few ever have or ever will feel so, for to be as bashful as was Peter is the misfortune of but few.

As the moments began to lengthen into seconds, and the seconds into minutes, with no change in his comatose burden, the scattered senses of Peter, like the cautious members of a segregated covey, when the deepening twilight has foiled the hunter's aim, began to return; and he began to con-

sider what was to be done. Before laughing at the ridiculous confusion into which he was precipitated, by this conduct so foreign to his experience, I would ask you to consider but one extenuating circumstance; *he loved her,* yea, to the very depth of his soul, he loved her.

Of course, in stories, when the hero is overtaken by calamities, either some sharp-sighted guardian angel dispatches aid; or else the event awakens in the victim some power, until then unknown; which, in either case, always exactly meets the emergency. But such was not the case with poor Wilson. No strange power left its secret seat to offer its adequate assistance to the incumbered Peter. No reserve force, until then never employed, was called out to oppose the infringing Fanny. But instead, the little strength and self-control he did have ordinarily, vanished like prairie-dogs before the approaching traveler. He wondered how the episode would of itself terminate. He wondered what Fanny would say when she awoke, which he thought she must surely soon do. If he should waken her, he wondered what plausible excuse she could possibly put on such an inexplicable break. Would she acknowledge to, and beg pardon for, having fallen asleep without any external influences. Or would she not rather accuse him of having scattered a soporific, or exercised hypnotic powers, to nefarious ends?

Once he thought of putting her quickly from him, and rushing rapidly from the room; but the next moment he trembled to remember it. He re-

called that of late she had been, like Iachimo's man, "strange and peevish," and that his redoubled efforts at interesting her had succeeded but indifferently; and, notwithstanding the two facts, that no sign of it had appeared that night, and that he could not trace its cause to himself, still it was his study not to strengthen her impatience by any indiscreet proceeding.

And thus it was that Peter could see no path to escape, upon which, between him and the desired goal, did not lurk some shape, forbidding and indistinct, in the purlieus of possibility. And yet more than once the slight motion sufficient to shatter the frostwork of a girl's slumber was in his very finger tips, and more than once he put it back, only to feel it return again; until a strange and new apprehension put to flight all thoughts of waking her. What inspired the thought he could not have told but suddenly the conviction came upon him that this event, however unavoidable on his part, would cause a rupture in their relations that could never be compromised. This feeling he tried hard to shake off, but found it strangely persistent.

Perhaps before attempting to detail the misery through which at least one of my characters passed during that night, it would not be amiss to glance at their respective positions. Peter Wilson had but one way to sit on a chair, tilted so as to make a biped rather than a quadruped of it in respect to the number of legs touching the floor. He had often been reproved for this presumptuous, space-consuming posture by his decorous mother, but so

natural had it become that even the presence of Fanny did not prevent his assuming it. And thus it occurred that on the night of which I write, he sat tilted, with no dorsal support, on the only plain chair in the room, with his right ankle on his left knee, and the toes of his left foot touching the floor; while Fanny sat upon his right side, her head upon his breast, and her hands clasping his, in all the somnolent ease of a modern rocker, while three or four more, of various designs, were arranged about the room, in maddening idleness. This was the situation which the shadow-paced mind of Peter had just about comprehended, Fanny emitting no symptoms of awakening, when the old clock attracted a moment's attention to itself by striking the hour of eleven.

Peter Wilson was a very automaton for punctuality. If Rip Van Winkle were naturally a thirsty soul, Peter Wilson was no less naturally a sleepy one. Between his supper and bed-time only a very brief tooth-picking space intervened; and but few incentives, his visits to Fanny being chief among them, were sufficient to break this rule. The persistent allurements of deferred slumber had just begun faintly to predominate over the charm of Fanny's presence, when her unheard-of conduct put, for the time being, all such thoughts to instant flight. But the Drowsy God, though easily deposed for a short time, cannot be held long from his necessary reign. And thus it was that Peter's turbulent feelings had no sooner somewhat subsided, and his pulse jaded itself to a more normal pace, than his

cause for concern was doubled by his fear of falling asleep. The limited motion to which he was reduced served to enhance these apprehensions. He found himself wondering, nothing occurring before, if he could remain awake until morning; and if not, what then. At first the operations of the dethroned god assumed rather the form of a reconnoitre, as if it were his intention to ascertain the exact power of the enemy, before making any decided advances; but at last, apparently satisfied on that head, his advances became really alarming. He had just acquired such footing that it required a considerable shake of the head to dispell his gathering powers, and that only for a moment, when an occurrence reinforced Peter.

Happening to raise his eyes to the open window, he was startled to perceive on the ledge what appeared to be a huge animal, wildly switching its tail, and with the dead body of a smaller animal hanging limply from its jaws. Under the diminishing influence of continued observation, however, it rapidly shrank into nothing more formidable than the house-cat, with a mouse in her mouth. With mixed sprightliness and dignity, she leaped upon the floor, and began on that most tantalizing species of torture, with which cats often afflict their victims before killing them.

The mouse was no sooner free of the claws and teeth of the cat, than it began to evince signs of life. Peter watched its zigzag course across the floor almost as intently as did the cat herself. Soon in pussy's mind mistrust overbalanced confidence,

and she stretched forth the inexorable paw, and crushed the poor wretch's growing hopes; not, however, without moving a short space herself. Thus the two, by short and painful stages, proceeded across the room, until, heavens help us! the maimed mouse is creeping under Fanny's chair, and the old cat is stretching her terrible paw under after it. With a start, Peter recalled a scene he had once witnessed, when one day a visitor, for all the world like the smaller of the present two, had entered suddenly and unannounced; and momently he expected Fanny to spring from his side, mount upon a chair or other eminence, and hoisting her skirts to the limits of discretion, demand an armistice before hostilities began. Why, indeed, did she not? Conceding that sleep had thrown around her too many of its oblivious folds for the penetration of the drastic influence, yet should not some tutelary fairy have whispered in her ear of the impending danger? Or have they, affrighted, fled? However, Fanny slept on just as if such a monster as a mouse had never been created.

And now the old cat, having "satisfied the sentiment"—perhaps mere playfulness, perhaps her sole heirloom of cruelty, transmitted from her savage ancestry, in a wonderful state of preservation, through many generations of civilization and domesticity—took the unfortunate, or rather fortunate, mouse in her mouth, and retired to the other side of the room. And now, Goddess of Modesty forefend! What does she contemplate? Eating it! Yes, the bloody banquet is approaching rap-

idly. Overworked as had been the blush-producing faculty in Peter that night, it yet managed to send up a faint one at that prospect. With great deliberation and apparent relish, the cat finished her repast; when, beware! is she crouching for a leap at Peter? No, no, just gathering her feet about her for a nap; for Pussy, you must know, is much too gentile a feline to indulge in full-side relaxation; so she just crouches, like her regal kinsman, gathering her feet about her, or, if it be cold, folding them under herself.

The effect upon the ear of Peter Wilson of the sounds made by the cat was a good example of the wonderful power exerted by circumstances over the natural senses.

His fears that the presence of the cat would wake Fanny made her leap from the window-sill to the floor shake the house. Her occasional low growls sounded like peals of breaking thunder; and he even fancied that the movements of the maimed mouse were audible. The breaking of bones during the primitive feast rose in acoustic volume until it rivaled an universal chorus. And that most noiseless of all processes, when for a few moments the old cat became her own hairdresser, after perhaps the most primitive fashion, decrepitated like burning salt. And she had no sooner relapsed into silence than the wheezy old clock told the hour by twelve drum-beats of the first magnitude.

The jaded pulse of Peter Wilson had no sooner subsided to as much evenness of pace as his novel

position and the uncertain tenure of Pussy's napping permitted, than it was again agitated. The present calamity came in no more formidable proportions than a barely perceptible irritation on the left shoulder. As the precise cause of this irritation is of course unknown, I ask that it be relegated to one or more of those microscopic imposters, charged with so much of the annoyance of mankind. At the first notice of their presence, a single stroke of nature's weapons is generally sufficient to discourage their operations. But alas! even this was denied him. And it is a curious fact that procrastination in this matter, like a cough or a sneeze suppressed, soon leads to serious results. Peter employed the only remedy possible under the circumstances, that of giving as much weight and friction to the afflicted parts, against the back of his chair, as was consistent with the doubtful tenure of his posture, which was but slight. But the assailants, seeming either to detect and despise the subterfuge, or to resent it as a malicious impediment to honest industry, merely redoubled their efforts. Oh! how often and how strongly did the temptation come upon Peter to unclasp the warm grasp of Fanny, which had not relaxed, and putting his nails to their proper office, disperse this petty annoyance! It was a modern parallel of the Lilliputians creeping over the swathed Gulliver; the only difference to mention, necessarily, being their respective positions in and on the skin.

As all the uneasiness endured by Peter from these midnight wanderers was of course caused by

them in innocent ignorance, I offer the following apology for them: It is an infinite number of years hence. About a dark opening extending far, far down into the earth, is circled a group of men, whose faces are networks of learned wrinkles. They are scanning eagerly each consignment of earth heaved from below for fragments of the rock-written records of the infancy of the world. Finally diligence, the maternal virtue, trusts her closely-guarded offspring, good-luck, to the care of the patient crowd. After an exhaustive examination, the find is labelled an *acarus*. But lo, what does the dissection reveal?

In its stomach is found a half-digested speck, which, after long and careful analysis, is decided to be a scale of human skin. As to just how much concerning the person it once helped to cover could be gleaned from an atom of his skin, thus preserved, my prescience falters at saying. Even making all allowance for the scientific possibilities of that advanced date, I yet fear that were I to assert that even the entire and precise physical man could be reproduced from this meager clew, an incredulous public would, in all likelihood, like an outwitted Jupiter, bestow a Cassandra's second gift upon my devining powers. But I trust that nobody will say that the complexion, the texture of the skin and hair, and the color of the eyes, at least, could be ascertained.

And now I fear to gain my end, I must employ the divination of that period, a kind of wheels within wheels, as it were. With the above-allowed

data, accompanied by a few stamps to pay postage, even a present day astrologer, or black magician, could easily bribe the stars or his confidential genius to reveal as much as the candidate would be apt to want to know about himself. What then should be their proficiency, years hence? I hold it a mild prediction, that from the human contents of the parasite's stomach, the mental, moral and the physical man could be developed with an entirety and accuracy that would cast Daguerre into the shade. And thus you see if at any time Peter's vital flame had succumbed, for memorials he would not have lacked. Indeed, at one time, according to his own estimation, no less than ten thousand of the pests were busy storing away mementos for the enlightenment of posterity, when the old clock sounded a tocsin to their efforts, and the hour, at one and the same time.

It was about this time that the various influences acting on Peter brought their victim to a standstill, an eddy, as it were. His incentives to wakefulness, the sleeping cat, his itching shoulder, and his strange dilemma, goring with both its horns, allowed him to be carried full half way into the Land of Nod, before they cancelled his inherent drowsiness. While the mind is thus enveloped in a halo of half consciousness, impressions from without and thoughts from within, like rays of light passing through a flawed prism, are often refracted, as it were, into amusing misrepresentations. The hallucinations thus experienced differ from dreams in being caused mostly by one's immediate sur-

roundings. During these half-dreams the real and fancied parts often meet and dovetail into each other in a manner no less interesting than inexplicable, as the following experiences of Peter attest.

In this twilight between sleep and wake, Peter took his favorite stroll, stepping from stone to stone down the rock-strewn course of a little rivulet, that carried its small volume of water between two high hills. Oh! what a drowsy day it was. The clear waters of the stream, the speed of which did not seem to correspond with its decline, sang, as they broke over the stony pillows in their bed, a mother's lullaby to her fretful babe. The very birds seemed to sing on the trees with closed eyes. The moving leaves, as they responded to the soft touches of the wind, said always, *sleep, sleep, sleep.* The flowers growing on the hillsides surcharged the air with somniferous perfume; and Peter breathed it in, and yet he could not sleep. Oh! what would he not have given to have been able—not losing the time for decently prostrating himself—to fall all of a heap, and sleep till doomsday. For the sleep that his weary spirits seemed to require is the kind so long and dense that no morning glimmers through it. But some mysterious, invisible power kept his legs in motion.

Happening to raise his eyes from the ground whereon he had been looking, the effect of seeing stretched across his stony path, immediately before him, at a level with his head, brought to its greatest dimensions by the reflected sunlight, the guy

of a primitive fly-trap, was such as to render his peripatetic charm brittle as a frozen soap bubble, and he snapped it accordingly, becoming as still as the stones about him. Anticipating the disagreeable feeling that would result from gathering the spider's silk on his face, he started to raise his hand to brush it down, and was not surprised, such are the anomalies of dreams, to find himself unable to move either of them. As he stood self-debating whether he should longer disobey his strange impulse to go forward, and boldly face the gleaming filament—the strange commands not allowing him to stoop and go under it, or around it, but only straight forward and upright—an old fat spider, deserting the watchtower of his flynet, and extending one of his hairy arms on each side of himself, like a rope-walker's pole, advanced along the guy, until it reached the point nearest Peter's face, where it stopped and fixed its eye upon him.

In an instant he knew that his doom was sealed. As an inspiration it came upon him that here was the source of his strange and fatal attraction. He saw now that it is not altogether an accident that flies become entagled in spiders' webs. For a moment he thought of resisting, but it was of no use. The spider held him as the Ancient Mariner held the Wedding Guest, "with his glittering eye." *Trilby* paused a moment to assure himself that the spell was genuine, and then began a series of peculiar manoeuvers. He settled himself crosswise upon his thread, facing Peter; who then for the first time noticed that he carried at the end

of either leg, which he had used as balances while walking, a coil of filament similar to the one on which he rested.

The one at the end of his right leg he now began to twirl around his head, like a cowboy's lariat. Peter had an intuitive warning of what was to follow, and closed his eyes; but in vain. The flying thread made a scarcely audible screech, struck the very Land's End of Peter's nose, and being covered with some viscid substance, stuck fast. And now a novel experience certainly befell Peter Wilson. His eyelids were perfectly transparent. They shut out no more light than if they had been films of molten glass. The spider, after getting cautiously upon the new-thrown thread,—my how it hurt!—as if doubtful of tis safety, but soon becoming satisfied therein, with slow and precise steps advanced towards the lid-seeing Peter. Oh, endurance, where are thy limits! The oncoming "green and gilded" ball of poison made no pause until he stood upon Peter's nose, exactly between his close-quartered eyes. Being here, he moved about as if he had his object in view, but what an object!

From the threads he bit two short pieces; these he tied to the lower lashes of Peter's eyes, in such a manner that they formed rings. Then dividing the remaining thread in two equal parts, he gathered three or four of the upper lashes on each of Peter's eyes together, and looped one thread securely about each group. He then ran the upper threads through the rings below; hence, when he

pulled on the threads, he drew the eyelids together; and wrapping the ends a time or two about two of his hairy legs, he appeared to stiffen himself for a contest.

Peter was not long in understanding the terms. The occasional perspicuity of dreams informed him that to break the spider's charm, he must open his eyes. And towards this he bent his efforts. But it was no child's play. In the strange swaying back and forth, which invariably begins whenever standing is deprived of its crutch, the eyesight—and strange to speak, it does not appear that pellucid lids remedy it—the novel contest went on. Peter had two disadvantages: his arms were still grown to his sides; also, whenever in his constant swaying, he moved a certain way, the thread still fastened to his nose pained him almost intolerably. How weak the eyelids are! When Peter strained to the floodtide of his strength he could feel the silk slip a little in his favor; but at the slightest relaxation, the gained ground was instantly lost.

Perhaps the strangest thing about this contest was the metamorphosis the spider underwent, and he is not an insect either. But in spite of that, he became in rapid succession, a frog, a monkey and a gorilla; and under the auspices of Peter's now blood-flecked magnifying tarpaulins of transparency, he was preparing to take on some terrible imaginary form, when Peter determined that if he meant to open his eyes at all, he must do it immediately. He gathered his ebbing energy for a final effort, which had well nigh declined into fail-

ure; when, as it seemed, every ounce of strength in his body, from his toes upward, flew into his eyelids, and with a snap! snap! of the breaking silk, they flew open.

Slowly the slightly-stirred mind of Peter winnowed the fact from the fancy, and he realized that he was on the point of falling, Fanny atop of him, chairs and all, upon the floor in a state of embarrassing conglomeration. The staring possibility of such a state of affairs somewhat spurred his Lethe-washed senses, and caused them to roll back, at a moderate pace, the curtain from the fact that what he had taken as the breaking of the threads at the liberation of his eyelids, was nothing but the clock, announcing the early hour of two; and that the sound of the thread flying through the air was its prefatory hiccough of five minutes before. And now the assuaging thought that even if he should fall, Fanny, from the form of her chair, would possibly not follow, rendered him for sometime unconscious of the presence of something, which the sense of feeling concluded to be a fly, journeying leisurely along the hypotenuse of his nose—the spider of the phantom.

The presence of the fly, if fly it were, I find difficult to explain, with veracious decency. What could have caused its wandering at such an hour? Whether it left its topsy-turvy berth on the ceiling because of being quartered with a turbulent bedfellow, or to enjoy an unusually early morning's "constitutional," or to investigate the cause of the light's late burning, or to enjoy sublime feelings

by exploring the regions of the "human face devine," is all conjecture. All of authenticity I have to write is, that, under the impetus of the irritation stirred up by this fly, the third thought in that series of Peter's, *id est,* should he fall, even though Fanny did not, it would wake her, in all reason, arrived at maturity; that shortly after the fly flew away, leaving where it had been a desire to be scratched, rubbed or otherwise irritated, which was only gratified by vigorous wrinkling and contorting of that feature, and indeed, of the entire face.

Great as is my optimism, it yet makes room for a class of men, few in number, I hope, who, if they had been in Peter's position, would have acted very differently. True, at first they might have acted very much as did he, but it would have been from exactly opposite motives. It would have been to anticipate the nuptials, to indulge in untimely connubialities, such as low-pressure embraces, and muffled kisses, which I understand to be kissing a lady through a silk handkerchief, or through her veil,—not more than one thickness of either, please. But no thought was further from the mind of Peter Wilson. Simple he may have been, but honest he was, if one's acts may be taken as any index to the character. No, from any dishonorable thought Fanny could not have been further though she had pillowed her downy head on the "consecrated snow that lies on Dian's lap."

Once more in this hazy drowsiness Peter's mental parts went straying. This time he strolled along the margin of a beautiful pond. It was noon-

tide; yet, the yellow sunshine was scarcely stronger than moonlight, and it seemed to pass through the water as though it had been layers of crystal. Corpulent tadpoles were disporting in the surf. A little silver-scaled fish, that had been loitering near the bank, alarmed at his approach, made a few light-swift movements through the water, and halting in the scalloped, slanting shaft of ebony cast by a floating leaf, eyed him stealthily. Up the slimy stems of the rushes embryo dragon flies were slowly covering the slippery way to wings; and Peter noticed that the nearer their destination they came, the easier was the ascent.

But what monopolized his attention was the line of uprising frogs, which, confidence in their mimicry overcome by his approach, sought safety in the water. He had never seen anything like it, and perhaps never will again. Not one of them described a simple, uneventful trajectory, and landed nose-first in the water. But every one had some new mode of passing the distance. Now one would mimic the curves of zigzag lightning; next, his nearest neighbor would sketch the tower of Pisa by a leaning spiral, and then one would invert the ordinary angle of incidence. And thus, with endless variety, and such mid-air activities as would make a modern circus Ariel doff his small-clothes forever, the disturbed frogs leaped from their cool retreats on the bank into the water. The vigorous operation of their hind legs soon carried them to the bottom, where, after a few devious turns, calculated to mislead the observer, they hid themselves

under the incrusted leaves. But, strange to say, no line of rising mud followed the recalcitrant frogs, and thus their misleading efforts were rendered fruitless.

From watching the strange actions of these frogs, Peter came to listen to the cry they made as they leaped. And he wondered what it expressed; anger, contempt, disappointment, exultation, or what? As he wondered, he asked himself what right he had to pass their home, since his presence was so distasteful to them; what right he had to drive them from their moist meditations to the bath, when perhaps it was not for their health? Even as he questioned himself, the voices of every translated tadpole of them all, from the little squeaky-voiced things, upon which the caudal insignia of their former state was still prominent, to the old warty-skinned patriarchs, whose voices were a deep bass, resolved themselves into such soul-stabbing tones of reproach, that Peter dared not provoke them further; and he stood stock still. Did this relieve the situation? Not at all. Just as if his advent had had nothing to do with it, on along the water's edge the athletic amphibians continued to select from their inexhaustible repertoire new air-lines for spanning the space; and as the center of activity went farther and farther from him, their cries became more and more clear and reproachful.

Witnessing this unaccountable spectacle, Peter asked himself if the fear of man, instinctive in every animal below him, adequately accounted for their pell-mell retreat whenever he came among them; or

if man's cruelty did not add considerable to it. To gain some relief from the trenchant tones of the frogs, Peter looked into the water at his feet, where he saw bugs crawling about, exactly resembling in every point the ones clambering so slowly up the rush-stems; where, as it were, the sun hatched them into resplendent dragon-flies; and he wondered what subtile influence had caused some to become discontented with their places, and leave, while their exact counterparts still seemed to find the oozy home to fill their idea of contentedness to lambent fullness.

From its margin, Peter allowed his eyes to wander out over the pond, and to the other bank, when, oh new-hatched wonder! the usual inverted reflection of the opposite scenery did not meet his eye; he saw instead the "bases of the hills." And upon one of the slimy slopes sat a Siren. She occupied a slight eminence, was surrounded by bleached human bones, and was employed in braiding the long black hair that still grew to a fleshless skull! Peter had read of these creatures, and of their fascinating solos; therefore, he was in some apprehension, until this thought calmed him: "Why, who would be betrayed by the Siren, when he could look into her lair and see the bones of former victims? I will look and not listen." As if she had heard his thought, the Siren, casting the unfinished task aside, rose, and in eager defiance, cut with rapid strokes the lucid space between them. Until near the water's surface, she came straight towards him; then, turning slightly upwards, an

intervening lily-pad hid her from his sight. As he gazed, the lily-pad began to be violently agitated. Was it fancy? No! Presently on its farther edge appeared the weltering Siren; which, being robbed of the illusion resultant from viewing it through the hyaline impediment, slowly resolved itself into nothing more mythical than a large bullfrog.

The relief experienced by Peter at this discovery was short-lived. The frog advanced to the center of the flat-floating leaf, and, spreading his feet out as braces, began to utter such sounds as never mortal heard before. Up the surrounding acclivities, and into the corresponding depressions, it rolled like the roar of an angry bull. As he bellowed, he fixed his protruding eyes, which blazed like concentric rings of different colored fire, full on Peter, in irresistible charm. As Peter returned the stare, he could see the frog's white throat, netted with fine crimson veins, swell with its exertion. From various parts of the pond came other voices, as if in reply, but their sound, distance-dulled, was nothing compared with the clamor of the one before him. Peter tried to pass on, but could not move. He was radically attached to the spot, i. e., rooted. Tripping the heels of this discovery, and just as the ripples from the trembling lily began to move the trash at the water's edge, three sportsmen emerged from behind a thicket on the opposite bank, with the frog exactly between them and Peter. Ear and eye co-operated in showing them the howling monster. With one impulse they heaved their artillery to shoulder. Peter tried

to wave his arms, but they were laterally-lashed again. He tried to cry, but his tongue seemed imbedded in his palate. Fearful stories of shot glancing on water flashed through his mind. The unheeding gunners sighted a moment, and then, bang! bang! bang!

The reports of the firearms, coupled with the fact that the charges splashed water on his hands, broke the charm; and roused Peter sufficiently for him to distinguish, with some trouble, between the real and the imaginary. He understood that upon nothing more suggestive than the clock's ticking, his mind had formed the vision of the strangely-leaping frogs and their sarcastic voices. The fact that chanticleer's matutinal salute was ringing in his ears made him know that the net-work of reciprocal rooster-calls—the rural chimes—was the nucleus of the lily-pad Siren, and *his* distant mates, —the fowls belonging where he was lodging being the visible frog, while the roles of those in the background were played by the fowls of the neighbors round. He realized that the myth of the sporing trio, and their attempt on his enchanter, was fabricated by the clock striking three. And he had palpable evidence that the supposititious water splashed on his hands by their missils was nothing more foreign than a few drops of that ropy fluid, the brewing of which, and trickling, is so greatly facilitated by one's dozing with the head hanging down and the mouth ajar. This was all that had hold on reality, his stereopticon imagination had provided the rest.

During the brief reunion of Peter's wits occasioned by the striking clock, he foresaw that unless he could do something to keep them thus, what appeared to him as a catastrophe worthy to be considered the second fall of man must surely occur. He, therefore, tried to think steadily of something, and as the clock was the only thing audible, he tried to fasten his mind upon it. How faint and tired it sounded! Could it be possible that the old clock, condemned to work while everything else slept, and aware of the wrong thus imposed upon it, was meditating—not a strike—but a rest? Or was it a secret habit with all time-pieces, when all eyes and ears were closed, to fold their own weary hands, and take a well-earned nap, waking and beginning their work again before anyone else in the morning? Sorted with the other experiences he had had that night, Peter did not consider this at all unlikely. Doubtless, his and Fanny's presence was all that had kept the old clock going until then.

To free himself of such fairy's offerings, he tried to think of the tick as symbolic of the three great divisions of time, past, present and future. The one, the resonance of which still fills the old clock's metallic depths, is time past. There! the one now breaking on the ear is time present; and the one hanging on the eaves of expectancy, like a ripe raindrop, is time future. And now the echo of Tock scarcely lasts till Tick renews it, and besides Tick sounds the fresher and clearer. Peter found himself wondering which spoke first, Tick

or Tock, when the old clock was set going. Ha! what was that, Tick speaking twice in succession? Has Tock lost his voice, and is the flight of time now being measured by the endurance and good nature of only one voice? How long can this last? One question is settled: Tick is the woman. And now once more she speaks, and for the last time, unless Tock answers. Did Tock answer? No! Has time merged into eternity, and so dispensed with the need of clocks? Is it fantasy? Have Peter's ears suddenly lost their function? Or has the clock stopped?

Futurity will, perhaps, confirm one of the last three hypotheses; and as a criterion for its guidance, and in defense of the clock, I can only offer the following: John Embers, Fanny's father, one of the rough-spoken but kind-hearted sort of men who make childhood miserable by addressing every little boy as "Buddy," and every little girl as "Sissy," had borborne to shatter with his lumbering tread the confidential halo of the parlor for a purpose so trivial and prosy as winding the clock. So, on that eventful night he had trusted the timely performance of this task to Fanny's thoughtfulness. Fanny will not forget it. No, Fanny never forgets!

During his few minutes of heightened lucidity caused by the incident above detailed, Peter thought with a pang and for the first time that night of his mother. How did his prolonged absence affect her? He recalled regretfully all the times when, for any cause, he had broken his hours, and how

she had complained of uneasy insomnia, and warned and requested him not to do so again. Being a woman given to prying into the future, what if she had risen from her sleepless couch, "cast a cup," and having wrung from the genius of the grounds, knowledge of Peter's whereabouts and predicament, set out for his relief? Heavens, with what a catastrophe would she climax the long-drawn-out pantomime!

Half expecting to see her, Peter raised his eyes, and oh! there she stood! She had closed the door after her, as she entered, though Peter had heard no sound; and now she stood leaning against it, her nightcap awry, gazing silently at the inexplicable scene before her. Her night-cap and gown, too, apparently the only covering she wore, instead of being the conventional white in color, were black as if the night through which she had come had been liquid dye. As Peter sat gazing in speechless amazement at his barefooted parent, while his scalp began to feel queer, she suddenly cleared *her* throat. Was it the usual prologue to conversation? Perhaps it was, but no converse followed; but instead perhaps the most novel performance ever witnessed.

As if fear, anger, astonishment, or some other emotion, had utterly overcome her self-control, the silhouetted intruder began to tremble from head to foot, at the same time uttering a low, buzzing sound. As Peter watched the quivering night-gown, the agitation rapidly became more violent, and the sound swelled until it reached the loftiest feminine pitch, to which the motion seemed to bear accom-

paniment. Oh inscrutable! what did it mean? Had his absence, or her coming through the dark, distracted her? Was she crazed with joy at finding him safe, and, as she might well have concluded from his position, this happy consummation of affairs; or did the incredible ludicrousness of the scene appeal thus movingly to her sense of humor? Or, in the name of information, what was it that could thus prevail with a woman on whose head gray hairs mingled on equal terms with the brown, in whose joints rheumatism had long been an unwelcome guest, and who had not for perhaps twenty years broken man's usual pace, until, at one moment, her swift, graceful movement would have brought blushes to the face of the most Mercury-footed, brazen-fronted member of the ballet; while, during the next, it seemed as if palsy, St. Vitus dance, and all other diseases of a vibratory nature, had reinforced each other for the sole purpose of reducing the good lady to argument in favor of the Atomic Theory. Now, the stage of her evolutions very closely resembled the reflections cast on the walls or ceiling by the sun shining on a pail of water, when the pail is disturbed. And now, as if beseeching something of the pair before her, she declines to the posture of supplication; and now, as if having gained it, she springs aloft until the respectable night-cap crashes into the ceiling, against which it seems to flatten and shape, as if it contained no head; and now, darkness!

As it was afterwards ascertained that Peter's mother on this memorable night confined her ex-

ertions in his behalf to keeping her husband, who had no sympathy with her fears, and found trying to convince her of Peter's safety preferable to making any efforts in his behalf, awake; and that, in all human probability, no one entered the room at all, fain would I pretend that the curvetting apparition was one of nature's practical jokes, which she plays off in order to set all the learned wheels in all the learned heads in Christendom in rapid rotation to roll out the mystery, while she sits behind the curtain and shakes her sides with laughter at their confusion. But I greatly fear that the discovery of the singed dead body of a candle-fly, of unusual size, within the lampglobe, on the following morning, labels it commonplace, and puts it infinitely below their consideration forever. This discovery I also consider sufficient basis for the following allegory: This "shard-borne" giant, during his self-important peregrinations about the room that night, had, perhaps, "blasted with excess of light," directed his explorations down the lamp-chimney; and in his efforts to acclimate himself to the unusual temperature, had extinguished the light, but not, however, until he was mortally burned.

Doubtless the noise it made in entering the flue was what Peter's strained imagination misconstrued as his mother's prefatory throat-clearing. As with warring wings, swan-like, it sung its own requiem, Peter pitched the song into the clouds; and what he imposed on himself as such unaccountable parental conduct was only the innovation of their own

shadows on the wall, under the auspices of the struggle between life and death.

For sometime after the black curtain was drawn on the dancing vision the long-lived echoes of her weird sounds filled the nondescript mind of Peter. Partly understanding and partly in doubt concerning what he had just seen, he sat in the gloom, half expecting to hear the echoes resolve themselves into his mother's voice; or to feel the blessing, yes, *blessing,* of her slight touch on his *left shoulder.* But neither occurred. And so he was surrounded by perfect darkness and silence, and the very juxtaposition of slumber, and yet no sleep for him; unless one minds to appraise the surreptitious siesta in which both feet were indulging, soundly, though not painlessly—sharp twitches playing far up his legs. All the parts of his person touching the chair were numbed almost into insensibility.

How still the night was! All the sleepers of the house seemed to be satisfied with the quality of the slumber they were receiving, and were making no guttural objections. Not a single little amorous breeze in all the airy ambiency with "cheek" enough to make some tiny, sleep-robbed leaf sigh for the stolen kiss. All the convocations of nomadic grimalkins held within audibility of Peter, had adjourned. And for once all the garrulous dogs within his earshot were wrapped in pacific dreams. No insect's shrill pipe pierced the sable gloom. In fine, all the "voices of the night" were hushed. The music of the stars alone was audible,

and I doubt if Peter Wilson heard even that. Through this primeval silence his senses began to sink, like bits of glass through the ocean. The voice of the kind old clock, which had twice called him back from the very jaws of ruin, was no more. The stimulus of violent head shaking, and fierce batting of the eyes, had lost its potency. Twice he heard, as it were, the waters of Lethe bubbling in his ears, and twice he shook the spray from his hair, and held his head once more above the waves. But he was weakening rapidly. He felt that he could not hold out much longer.

Even as he came to this conclusion, a low, dull sound broke upon his ear. Was it real, or only another of fancy's pranks? It seemed to come from nowhere in particular, but to be rising, fog-like, from the earth; and it caused Peter to recall a noise he had once heard a caterpillar make inside a cocoon. But this state of uncertainty did not last long, for, oh despair! he soon recognized that it was the well known subterranean harbinger of the earthquake. Close upon the heels of its herald, came the shock itself. It was just a mere ripple, as if the earth, in her morning run, had come within hailing distance of some other haggard of space, and had given it a familiar nod. None of the furniture changed rooms, though the chairs danced about as though they held very restless occupants, and the clock hummed with the usual after-striking echo.

From the kitchen came the clatter of crockery and tinware; and the old cat, doubtless coupling

the disturbance with dreams of flying boot-jacks coming her way, sprang up and fled from the room. But to Peter it was one of the most terrible convulsions that this old Oblate Spheroid ever survived, and that, too, after making generous allowance for the imperfect attention he was constrained to give it by reason of the absorbing nature of the difficulty he experienced in keeping the "center of gravity" over the "point of support." His fears of Fanny's awakening during the shock were divided by this interesting task also. But when at last the quake had passed, as the furniture was loosing its motion, and his subsiding oscillations released a part of his attention, and Fanny did not justify his painful expectation by the slightest word or movement, his amazement went several degrees higher than it had been that night.

Infinite fool! Had there been no earthquake? Was his narrow escape from losing his balance the drop of reality which his disordered senses had magnified so many diameters? But would that have caused him to feel so aroused? Why, hardly. And yet, to sleep through an earthquake! Perhaps it had awakened her, and she was ashamed to let it be known.

To what conclusion Peter's cogitations on this difficult question would have come will never be known, because they were interrupted by a voice from an adjoining room, highly charged with maternal solicitude, calling, "Fanny!" Now, Peter, thou hearest the crack of doom, and thy sins are scarlet; tremble, therefore, and die. But either

because she did not hear, or through disobedience, Fanny did not respond. "Fanny!" the voice repeated, "something louder than before," and it passed through Peter like an electric current. As the person addressed still remained silent, her mother sent forth a screech like that of a baffled witch, and each "particular hair" on Peter's head stood as erect as the most vertical stalagmite in Mammoth Cave. "What! Did it fail to wake her? There must be somethin' the matter. I'll go in and see." But just as the sounds indicative of the carrying out of this intent were becoming intolerable to Peter, they were checked by her husband thus expressing himself: "What's the use wakin' her now, let her sleep, since the 'quake is all over. Maybe they set up late."

The latter part of this speech contained a suggestion upon which the good woman seemed more disposed to descant than to carry out her original intention. And so, getting back into bed, she, in a much-injured tone, thus announced her grievances: "Why, that's just it; settin' up every time he comes till the katydids quit singin'. It's enough to kill any girl. I don't know how the rest of you feel about it, but for my part, he'd confer a favor on me if he'd stay away until he learns the proper time to go home. But what can she do about it? She can't tell him to leave. Like as not, she aint been in bed an hour. I wonder what time it is. I wish the clock would strike. I don't even hear it tickin'. Guess the earthquake stopped it."

If Peter had been given his choice between hav-

ing the woman come into the room and wake Fanny, and hearing her say what she said, he would likely have chosen the former. He keeping Fanny awake! His welcome there not entirely clear! He lacked the philosophy that overlooks false charges, and they stung him deeply. Happily their edge was somewhat blunted by the fact that Fanny's awakening was once more postponed, and also by her astonishing conduct.

Why had both the confusion and her mother failed to rouse her? Surely, as the good woman had said, there must be something wrong. Perhaps she was dead. Heavens! Ha! ha! nonsense! Are not her hands warm; is not the gentle rise and fall of her breast faintly perceptible in the head on his bosom? What is it then? Possibly she had had a stroke of paralysis. Or perhaps the warmth of her hands and the secondary ebb and flow of her bosom existed only in Peter's fancy.

It was just at this critical juncture that Fanny, through the sleep an earthquake had failed to shatter, and in a voice she had denied a mother's anxious, impatient insistence, as if in response to Peter's anxiety, made the following unexpected confession: "Oh, won't it be jolly, royal! And I planned it all! Just to think of him going to church with me, sitting in the seat by me, and then to think of Mr. Gluson taking me from his very arms, as it were, and marrying me! And it to be no longer off than tonight, too! Why, it will be the very acme of jokes!"

Oh, ears, forswear your function! In some

way arraign yourselves for misreporting! Say you made those words from other sounds than those coming from Fanny's lips, and prove it, too! Alas! it may not be. Slowly but steadily, the crushing truth sank upon him. Fanny did not love him. Of all the unknown events with which pregnant futurity teems, not a birth could she have brought to light that would have surprised him more. Through all their courtship he had never suspected but that she loved him as completely as he loved her—so complete had been the deception.

Had not she herself made the first overtures, and been all along more than half the wooer? Of course, he had remarked their antipodal characters; but he was reassured by that old adage about the "affinity of contrast"; and if there was nothing in it, why had he become so deeply enamored of her? Plain as day, he saw through it all; and yet he tried somewhat to stanch his bleeding wounds by persuading himself that she had loved him, at first, a little, at least; but, tiring of him, she had lighted on this terrible expedient of getting rid of him. Mr. Gluson he numbered among his friends, but he had never had the slightest occasion to consider him in the light of a rival, a successful one, too. He had scarcely seen him and Fanny speak with each other. How secret they had kept it!

But the subterfuge availed but little. Down upon him like a storm, bore the awful, depressing, grinding, sickening, maddening truth. Let things past be as they were, he had lost her forever. He winced under the blow. He felt a choking sensa-

tion. His eyes swam in tears. Now, he doubted if he had heard the words at all, and now they were bubbling, like fatal water, in his ears. But hold! Perhaps she was only in jest. Look in her face; possibly she is awake, and has said this merely as a way out of the present difficulty. Half afraid of seeing the mocking smile that would confirm her words, Peter looked in her face. Ho! ho! what could one hope to see, when everything was as dark as night? Without making the slightest perceptible movement, she had merely uttered the words; and that was all. But that was more than enough.

Peter recalled that her voice had borne the peculiar, uniform, unguarded accent of sleep-talk. No one could mimic that. The evidence was conclusive. Floods of sorrow surged through his bosom. With as much fervency as he dared, he pressed the fingers of his first, his last, his only, love. He could feel his face becoming beaded with icy drops. They hung upon his brows like leaden weights, and trickled down his cheek. He tried to comfort himself by thinking how much worse it would have been, if, according to their long custom, he had walked to the church with her on the following night, and there, before the audience, had borne the full brunt of her cruel plan. He tried to think of the strange marring of the plot as a piece of providence, and to thank Heaven for it. But all reverted back to the fact that losing her was the chief cause to consider, and that the how, when, or where, were only preliminaries. But, oh

the keen, the indescribable pain of having her head upon his bosom, even as she told him she loved another; of not being able to reply with a word, and of being obliged to remain with her until chance should release him! For now he would sooner have thought of killing her than of awakening her.

And this, then, is the slightly abortive conclusion of one of the manoeuvers of modern flirtation; one of a kind which seems to natures of a certain sort as essential as the air they breathe. One which among many is discussed as a great masterstroke of strategy, in which the height of success is measured by the depth of the deceit; and, when it no longer interests, is dismissed lightly as a humming bird leaves the twig on which it has rested. Jilts, flirts, coquettes, all the opprobrious terms that languages afford, or tongues can invent, be multiplied unto you! You have a fault in your nature that establishes your fraternity with the traitor, the thief and the murderer. If you must needs be, confine your operations to your kind, or curses be on you!

But to return to Peter Wilson. How does he fare? Like ink spilled on a blotter, the baleful truth has soaked into his soul. Our first experience with the duplicity of men, and this was his first of the kind, is usually more affecting than all that follow it combined. Already he sought refuge from the dark thoughts that rose in his soul by roving in the only world that was left him—the memories of the past. His nature was of the kind that does not love, or pretend to, but once. All his

future seemed a mass of chaotic gloom, black as the night around him. Oh! what would he not have given to be able to rush from the hated room into the forest, and seating himself upon the mossy roots of some kind old tree, that would not laugh at his weakness, wring his sorrowful soul into tears! What did he care ever to see another human face, since the one he loved most had proven unworthy? His was not the kind of natures that find solace in the tearful sympathy of friends. Even in his best and most cheerful moments the seeds of seclusion and solitude were in him. He would rather bear his sorrow alone. He would draw a sacred halo about it, within which the presence of anyone would be considered an intrusion, and anyone's condolence merely an impertinence. And under the apology of this conviction, even his humble chronicler, who has attended him so minutely and tediously through all his hours of agony, asks the privilege of bidding him, for a space, adieu.

Now is the time when the lark, lightly springing from its dewy couch, soars, singing, into the sky, until the eye is rendered useless by the distance attained, and only the evidence of the ear remains to assure us that it has not passed the crystal doors of heaven itself. Now is the hour for that crepuscular bird, sitting lengthwise its perch, to issue its ancient commands concerning the chastisement of Poor Will. From the far off meadows comes the drum of partridges. The domestic fowls walk about in the imperfect light in search of

worms; while out on the blasted top of the old apple-tree the scarlet-topped wood-pecker sounds his ominous rat-ta-ta-ta at the door of the unfortunate grub.

That great master artist, the sun, with the first pencils of daylight for color, and the whole eastern sky for a canvas, is painting scenes too gorgeous for human rivalry. The opposite hemispheres of light and darkness that have chased each other over the earth incessantly, save for the three hours rest Joshua gave them, at the rate of more than a thousand miles per hour, ever since the "greater light was made to rule the day," and our old planet, with the others, began to cast its cone of shade through space, are exerting their influences of old. And even as two rivers of different-colored water—one of which gathers its floods from the black earth and unwholesome fens, while the other collects its volume, which flows over golden sands, and moves well-worn pebbles at its margin, from a thousand sparkling mountain springs—which are compelled to flow in one channel, will have, for some distance from their confluence, a strip of water between them, the color of both partly and neither entirely; so, between these hemispheres of light and darkness are two clasps of mixed light, one of which we call dawn, the other, twilight. Baying the heels of day, comes the twilight, bringing to honest men release from toil, and lightsome hopes of peace and rest; while it drives the night-prowlers, man and animal, from their frouzy lairs. And then, lighting up the dark tracks of the night,

revealing the misdeeds, comes the dawn; driving the night-wanderers to their dens, and reinstilling in the bosoms of honest men thoughts of strife and industry.

It is the dawn that is now upon us, and by its crescent light let us just peep in and see what has become of Peter. There he is; but that he occupies the same position, we would not admit it to be him; and even now, we are tempted to believe that some spectre from the graveyard has taken his place. His face looks as hard as a chiseled one. His cheeks are pale and bloodless. His forehead is wrinkled. His eyes are sunken and hollow. He fetches his breath in short gasps. Can this be Peter Wilson? Ah! the night has wrought fearful mutations in him. Should he go home as he is, his mother would scarce know him. And yet it is Peter, and he knows that the end is near.

The reviving influence of the dawn, that sets the birds singing, has penetrated the walls of the house at last, and its presence is acknowledged by the creaking of bedsteads, occasioned by restless occupants; and in the throwing about of bed-clothes, and sundry yawns. Like fish coming to the water's surface for air, are the undecided returns of the sleepers from Dreamland. But that it was Sunday, the house would have been astir long since. Peter had remembered, and was thankful for this. But even the Sabbath's grace could not much longer protect him. While Peter was wondering how it would end, who would find them first, and what would be said and done, his long-borne burden moved

slightly, opened her eyes, and then stood up. Then, while both her hands flew instinctively to her slightly-ruffled hair, and just as the shadow of a blush mounted to her cheeks, she said "I hope you rested easy, dear."

But Peter Wilson, who had pitched forward at the unexpected removal of Fanny's weight until his chair stood on all its legs, and had, with difficulty, removed his right foot from its long position on his left knee, did not reply. Gazing straight ahead, and walking unsteadily from his long experience, he strode out of the room, leaving the door open behind him. As he passed out, the sun, barely horizon-free, stared him full in the face. It had completed its nether journey since his ill-fated entrance into the house. Never, oh let us hope, during its hidden course, shall Peter Wilson, or for that matter any one else, endure such another night. And yet, what redress did the following night promise?

As for the triumphant Fanny, she watched him as he walked out, closed the door after him, clapped her hands together, and glancing around the room, cried out, "Oh Father, Mother, and all the rest, get up, and be even with the sun, and Peter, who has just gone, taking the hint at last, and leaving in its place his hat." And thus it happened that the series of flirtations conducted between Peter Wilson and Fanny Embers did not end matrimonially. Thus it occurred that Peter entered her home with prospects, as he thought, bright as

a sheaf of sunbeams, and left it in despair dark as Timon's cave.

And now, having given the somewhat abrupt conclusion of the courtship, I leave everyone to his own mind as to how it came about. The extent of the surprise of Fanny's family at finding their indulged daughter, not only up before anyone else, but with her *bed made,* was only equalled by its pleasant nature; and the extent of the surprise in Peter's family—he being lucky enough to get home and into bed without awakening anyone—at no amount of search being able to locate their eldest son's Sunday hat, was only equaled by its unpleasant nature. Peter, of course, remembered having worn it the night before, but what he had done with it on coming home, he had no idea, until he was reminded by the arrival of a messenger from Fanny, bringing his hat, along with all the other little tokens of affection he had given her from time to time; and also a note from her, the tenor of which was that, "after the unaccountable occurrence of last night he must not try to see her again."

This stage of the proceedings of course demanded an explanation, and the foregoing is the one made. The fires of love in Peter, thus rudely quenched, were never rekindled. From that very day he began, not abruptly and at once, but slowly and surely, to sever his connections with his kind; until now, daylight does not reveal to his sight a more unwelcome object than the human face. As for Fanny, the sleep-mentioned Mr. Gluson soon after, but not the following night, married her. She

admitted that all during the "bating" of Peter, she had no other intention than that of deceiving him, and that Gluson was party to, and approved of, her plans for the culmination of the plot; but the motive of her strange action, marring the plot, she has declined to disclose. Possibly she herself does not know what caused it. Perhaps it is explained by her experiencing one of those moments of rare weariness, when some more supple hand than ordinary manipulates the drowsy noose, and under the influence of which men have slept under all imaginable conditions. Perchance, it was the intervention of Providence. And thus conjecture might have an endless tether, while likely the object for which it sought would remain forever inscrutable as the hair-raising tale of his nether lodging that the ghost of Hamlet's father might have disclosed, but that he was forbid.

THE DRUNKEN FAIRY.

I well believe that every mind contains
Remembrance of at least one incident
That trifles all the other happenings;
And which, in all the stores of memory,
No equal hath; but all alone it stands,
Mountain-like, on the plains of Commonplace.
Of different natures these star scenes may be;
Perhaps they are from horror's bloody hand;
Or, are mysterious, strange and unexplained;
Or, from the "touch of nature" interwound.
But there they stand, with sacred pales around;
From memory's common debris thus inclosed,
Like rich mens' graves in church-yards of the poor.
Now, it so happens that my mind contains
Remembrance of one scene that hath no peer
In all my memory's realms; and many years
It hath been still inclosed with sacred pales;
And now I break the pales, and turn it free.
The day was perfect; search the clear sky o'er,
No cloud appeared; no, not a fleck of white.

And we were six, three maidens and three youths,
All in a place dressed by Delight herself,
A garden full of flowers; where, I think,
Grew every flower that's "to the manor born;"
But no pale foreigners, from softer climes,
Were seen, in jars of stone to pine and fade,
Like men mewed up, or animals encaged.
And thus, the ears and nose and sense of touch,
Had song and perfume and the balmy air,
For every bird was gleeful; and for the eye,
There surely beauty was, and beauty's smile.
But even on this scene I closed my eyes,
As though it were too bright to be observed
For long at once; and one that came before
I saw; 'twas this: The fresh, young, cheerful Spring,
Just come, "her buskins gemmed with morning dew,"
Pouring roses in the lap of flowery May.
But gone was Spring, and now Midsummer held
The meridian glory of her matron pride;
And hence, with birds and bees and butterlfies
The air was filled; compatriots all
Of languorous, love-compelling Summer.
But more than others of the feathered kind,
Were humming birds; oh how they flashed about,
Like winged emeralds, in among the flowers!
And in security's safe taunt, how near
To us they dared approach! Around them still
Their buzzing wings a shimmering halo made,
Whether flying, or hanging motionless,

And sipping nectar from some floweret's cup.
And just as one, more daring than his mates,
As he shot by, did almost touch the face
Of our young hostess, thus the lady spoke:
"Do any of you know there is a way
Whereby these lively creatures may be tamed,
All in a trice, and without injury,
Either to them or us? And so perfect
Is the charm, that they may be made to lie,
All limp and lifeless, in our hands, while we
Observe their tiny forms, and can admire
The rainbow radiance of their plumage tints.
But hold, the charm's efficiency to prove
Nor time nor place than now and here, I think,
Could be more fit—Excuse me for awhile."
She passed into the house; thence issued soon,
In her hand, a bottle, on the sides of which,
Its age's index, dust and cobwebs hung.
This held she up and said: "Behold the charm!
The spirit, potent over birds as men."
And then, with flask uncorked, she sought the flowers.
Oh! how my heart did leap beneath my vest,
As fairy-like, she tripped from bloom to bloom,
Filling their chalices with ruby wine!
And how I longed to hold her in my arms,
And kiss her icing lips, and call her mine,
This Hebe of the flowers!—And all too soon
The task was done; as many as she chose
Of the flowers' cups with the red wine she filled,
And then returned. But note the change behind,
Among the flowers! That one more fair than they

Had been among them, all showed evidence;
From envy paler yet the lily grew,
And redder still the red rose blushed for shame.
But scarcely had the floral Ganymede
Her place resumed among her wond'ring guests,
Than, as we watched the "wined" bowls, we saw
A humming bird his slender bill extend,
And from the throat of Flora 'gin to sip
The man-maddening drink; and still it sipped,
As in that chalice's poisoned draught it found
Some fascination irresistible.
And then, as the wine's fumes began to spread,
And of their vigor rob its falt'ring wings,
With its tiny feet to the blossom's edge
It clung, and still did sip the fatal drink.
And now, alas! the rising fumes defeat
The appetite that they themselves did make;
And so, upon the grass-carpeted ground,
All limp and lifeless, fell the drunken bird.
And then we hied us quickly to the spot,
And took it up; and so from hand to hand
It passed, and all admired. Our hostess then
We praised, and thanked for the shrewd, clever ruse
That had into our hands, and without harm,
This delicate creature given. And so,
When each had gazed enough, we gently laid
The tiny bird, still helpless, on the grass;
And waited then, the first faint signs to see
Of nature throwing off her enemy.
Nor had we long to wait; for birds, it seems,
Are all of nature too etherial

To be long held a slave to fumy wine,
And so, ere it had long lain on the grass,
The first faint tremors of revival 'gan
To run along beneath its downy coat.
And rapidly they spread, and stronger grew,
Until the bird stood upright. But, alas,
Not even then did evolution cease!
For larger and still larger grew the bird,
Until at last unto our fear-struck eyes
The tiny bird a perfect fairy seemed!
And thus it stood, and turned its eyes upon us;
And as it looked, I noted well its face,
And all 'peared joyous, or had been but late,
Save on one delicate cheek, where 'gan to show
A spot of crimson sorrow; and, as I gazed,
O'er all the face the corrosive shadows stole—
And as we speechless stared, it thus did speak:
"And will it be ever thus, ungrateful man,
Still upon those that most do mean thee good
The deepest wrong to heap! Alas! Alas!
For those that seek to serve the race of men!
I might have known!—But hear me now, and judge,
Whether I have cause or not for this reproach.
"I am a fairy, sent from Oberon,
To act as watch-dog here; and from this place
Malicious elves and wicked thoughts to chase,
And thus the spot keep pure. And so I came;
And for disguise, what more appropriate
Than the body of a light-winged humming bird?
And so in this disguise I came. But oh!
As soon as 'mong the garden flowers I came,
And from their honey-bowls began to sip,

After the nature of the humming bird,
I found a gold-lined cup, in which was not
Nature's sweet wholesome honey; but instead
Man's nectar, poisoned with the germs of sin;
And this I sipped; the drastic fumes crept up,
And robbed of motion soon my borrowed form;
And thus I first knew sin: now, hear my doom.
"We have no God, as mortals claim to have,
To purge the fullness of the infected soul;
And hence, when all-devouring sin doth come,
As come it does sometimes, even to us,
And has to me, there is no cure, no hope;
But each in exile must endure his curse,
Until at last, as sin's true nature is,
It doth devour the thing on which it feeds.
And hence, in exile from the fairy bands,
Lest upon others his contagious curse
Itself should fix, the sin-stained one must go.
"And so must I; and now, alas! no more
Shall I my friends and kindred live among;
But far away, beyond all fairy haunts,
My cursed life must spend, while life remains.
With wicked things alone I must consort,
Though ne'er before; yea, in regions now,
So wild and rugged, so remote and stern,
The scars of earth, where never good things come,
My wretched time drag out; perchance must stand
Alone on barren, wind-swept mountain-tops,
And hear wolves howling to the frozen moon.
And then for shelter, I must nightly creep
Into some cavern, slimy, foul and dark;
And with the loathsome creatures there consort!

Alas! how hard reality must prove,
When e'en anticipation is so dread!
"But oh hard fate! Another thought now comes,
Keener than all combined. No more shall I
My coy fairy love again caress,
Or even see; unless, love-goaded, I
Some starless night around the fairy camp
In stealthy silence creep; and so observe
Another in her heart, perhaps, enthroned.
Then, as sweet balsam for the wounded heart,
Thence to be chased by angry sentinels.
But all such thoughts, farewell! For now no more
Shall I behold my kind. No more, alas!
By mossy fountains, in the lonesome wood,
In fairy sports take part. But now, afar,
Midst sinful creatures, deserts made for sin,
Wear out the tedium of sin's hateful date;
Thence into nothingness, whence first I came.
"And now, but one word more: My curse and fall,
Through ruin to me, unto yourselves may do
Most sovereign good; yea, keep you from like fate;
And thus the purpose of my errand here
More perfectly be done, than otherwise.
Then hear what now I say: Abstain from wine;
For soul's most deadly enemy it is;
And from your resolution ne'er be turned
By the light, senseless prattle of the world,
Or by the evil working from *your* hearts.
And should you ever doubt the evidence
Of what I say, and mine own fate grow dim

On memory's many-pictured sheet, then do but this:
In other flower-cups pour the ruby wine.
Note the effect, and then remember this:
The human soul is flower-and fairy-like,
And from the same offense takes injury,
Howe'er the vile flesh closes o'er the wound,
And hides it from the search of mortal eyes."
The voice ceased, and in a thought almost,
The shrinking fairy was a bird again;
And soon its wav'ring flat'ring flight began;
The wings, which erst had buzzed invisible,
Beating the air with dull and bat-like strokes.
Askance we looked, nor any dared to meet
His neighbor's eye; and soon from that sad spot,
We, each in silence, took our solemn way.

THE PASSING GODDESS.

When my father died, and each of we children were to receive some memento of him, I chose the rifle, and I never regretted the selection. Many, indeed, were the pleasant hours I spent, with only this full-stock companion, in the heart of the forest. For some months after becoming its sole owner, I spent almost all my time in acquiring the culminating and difficult feat of David Crockett, shooting between a squirrel and the bough on which it was lying, at the point nearest its heart, and causing it thereby to fall to the ground, stunned, but otherwise uninjured. Many balls did I send on bloodless errands, and to many squirrels did I afford another chance at life, in acquiring this all but impossible feat. But at last it was mine, and I would shoot a squirrel in no other way if I could help it. But it is not my present intention to trace for you all my rambles through the solemn wood, or to acquaint you with all my juvenile deeds there-

in; but to relate an occurrence that rather dampened my hunting ardor than otherwise.

My father's cottage stood on the brow of a lofty hill, from under the base of which flowed an everlasting spring; and it was one of my youthful tasks to convey no small portion of the water used by the family from this same fountain. With a boy's natural reluctance for doing anything useful, I, of course, demurred a good deal at this. But there was one guerdon, the promise of which never failed to overcome my scruples, and insure a quick errand—the permission for a hunt. One day I asked my mother for an afternoon's furlough into the woods, and the usual service was enjoined. With nimble steps I started for the spring. I filled my pail, and was half way back up the hill; when, happening to step on a rolling rock, or something else, I fell headlong, and the thirsty dust licked up my water. I returned to the spring, refilled my pail, and started for home once more; but at exactly the same spot, the same thing occurred again. Now thoroughly impatient, mad, and astonished, by turns, I paused to consider what it meant. Had it been caused by some spirit, having in charge the preservation of wild animals, to keep me out of the woods? With sober steps I returned to the spring, and filled my pail for the third time; and then, having always heard that haste makes waste, and having recently been made a believer in the doctrine, I seated myself on the mossy roots of a large sycamore that grew hard by, and sought to soothe

my perturbed senses, and regain the mastery over myself.

As I sat there, having bared my sweaty brow to the gentle breeze that was blowing, I wondered if the outpouring catastrophe would occur again; and, as the surest preventative I knew, assured myself that it would. This may be considered poor metaphysics, but it has always proven genuine with me. To be sure, it might be objected that anyone, having anticipated a thing, would observe increased diligence, either to cause it to occur or not to occur, as the nature of the thing might demand. But I do not speak of this; but of the things that merely *happen,* and that no amount of caution or negligence on our part would tend either to produce or to prevent. I have no way of explaining this, unless it be that nearly all the things that merely happen come as surprises, and that if we seek to rob them of the element of surprise, they do not come at all. But do not think now that you can forestall all future happenings of an unpleasant nature. Even if it proved true with you, and everything you could think of as happening, did not happen; still, everything that is intended to happen, would happen just the same; and not until it *had* happened would you perceive how completely you had been overreached. But strange to say, the theory in my case, with regard to tumbling down again, was never proven.

I was just on the point of getting up to make another trial, when I heard the report of a rifle nearby. Then I heard a strange buzzing sound; it

came swiftly nearer. Crash! Darkness! For awhile I seemed to be lying in absolute dark, through which brilliant lights were flashed at intervals. Then the lights ceased, and it became a soft, violet glow, exactly such as one sees when he turns his face toward a bright light, with his eyes tightly closed. I did not feel any pain, but for some reason I could neither move nor speak; and I had no desire to do either, only to lie quiet and enjoy the sensations. How long I lay thus, I do not know; but all at once I perceived a tall, graceful woman beside me. I had not observed her approaching, nor was I conscious of her presence until she stood beside me. Oh! she was fair, and tall and graceful. She wore a robe that seemed to be made of leaves sewn together; her hair was gatherd in a knot on the back of her head, and pinned with tender, crimson thorns; and her eyes were clear as crystal. Years later, when I read for the first time the phrase "A daughter of the Gods, devinely fair, and most devinely tall," an image of the appearance she then presented at once flashed into my mind; only, she was one of the Gods themselves. I looked at her, and essayed to speak; but could not. She seemed to understand, for she hastened to say, "I am Diana, Goddess of the Chase."

I had seen in some old book a picture of this divinity, her bow in her hand, a quiver of arrows over her shoulder, and her timid fawn skipping along beside her; with underwrit: "Diana, Goddess of the Chase," but I never expected her to look like this. After awhile she spoke again: "You

are rather badly hurt, and it is all through a disciple of mine; and I intend to give you some compensation. But first I will make you as comfortable as possible." Saying which, she plucked a trio of leaves from a pawpaw bush that grew close by, and arranging them in such a manner that they would hold water, she brought me a drink from the spring, and supported my head as I drank. When I had done drinking, she said: "I would try to dress your wound, but I have no skill in surgery; that belongs to Aesculapius, whose mother my arrow killed at his birth." Artemis then unfastened the cool, moist leaves in which she had brought the water, and continued.

"If you have read or heard much about me, you are doubtless surprised at seeing me here, far away from my beloved Olympus, and all my immortal kind and kindred. But I can give you good reasons for it. I was obliged to leave Oylmpus, and seek the shades of newer forests, because the chase there had so degenerated as to be no longer deserving of a Patron Goddess; and I fear that even here my name is destined at last to be forgotten. I chose to appear to you, because I consider you one of my most ardent devotees; I also owe you some expiation because you received your wound at the hands of one of my followers—the old man with the little speckled dog." (I recognized him.) "Besides I have long intended to make to mankind some reparation for my ruthless cruelty when surprised by Actaeon in that extreme state of nature. And, too, I feel compelled by the

intolerable sorrow of my coming oblivion, to make a confidant of some mortal. You may think, judging from the present flourishing condition of my worship, that it could never die; but alas, it is this very ardency of pursuit that will the sooner annihilate me.

"Hence, as I roved restlessly from hill to hill, stung by the tormenting anticipation of abandonment, I saw you struck down by the flattened ball of an unknowing hunter; and I determined to come to you, and do what I could to make pleasant the space of your unconsciousness. I intend to give you some pageants, or representations, culled from different periods of my triumphant reign as Goddess of the Chase; also some that shall attend my decline. I want you to give close attention to everything you see, and perhaps, in after years, by relating it, you can somewhat retard the advent of my desuetude; but come it must, sooner or later. Of course, to give you one scene from every kind and method of hunting would be impossible, in the time I have; I shall, therefore, select only a few representative ones. Now, look, but speak not."

With this she ceased speaking, and the presentations began immediately after. They much resembled stereopticon views of today, though whence they came, whither they went, or what agency produced and destroyed them, I could not tell. They merely played awhile before my eyes, and then faded. But Luna's injunction to silence was doubly unnecessary; I was too awed to speak,

even if I had had the power. And so the pantomime began. Concerning the first part of the "program" I shall say but little. It was merely selections from the venery of old, mixed with some scenes of a mythological character; such as Perseus severing the heads of the Medusa; Hercules' archery in destroying the Stymphalian birds, etc. Once more a band of skin-clad barbarians, with dogs and spears, slew the savage boar; and once more the naked Indianman crept up to the sleeping elephant, cut off his trunk, and managed to keep out of the way of the great beast until it bled to death.

As soon as that part of the repertoire consisting of kinds of hunting I had never seen was apparently concluded, Selene, who had kept silent during the entire performance, spoke again. "I will now," she said, "give you a tableau of an anecdote told of each of my renowned followers in the New World, Daniel Boone and David Crockett. One is a fact, the other merely a story, yet good enough to be dramatized, as illustrating the perfect marksmanship of the man of whom it is related." She then became silent, and I, attentive. Suddenly, on a high bough of one of the massive trees before me I saw a large raccoon, seemingly fast asleep. As I gazed at it, my attention was attracted to some other object, in another direction. I looked, and perceived a fur-clad hunter, stealthily approaching. But it was more the magnetism of his presence that drew my eye than anything else, for his footsteps were almost noiseless. On he came, darting his keen eyes everywhere through

the underbrush and dense foliage, in search of game. Of course the unscreened raccoon did not escape the scrutiny of those all-seeing orbs; and with a movement lissom and noiseless as as that of a cat, the hunter brought his rifle to his shoulder. But the click of the lock, as he drew back the hammer, caught the ear of the 'coon, which did not seem so drowsy, after all. Raising its head before the hunter had time to fire, it, in a sharp, snappy voice asked, "Are you Crockett?" "Yes," said the hunter, seemingly much astonished at hearing the animal speak. "Well, then," continued the talking quadruped, "you need not shoot, and waste your charge; I know you would hit me, so I will just come down without being shot. I never fancied a death by bullet anyway."

"But what will you do after you get down," asked the hunter; who had now regained his self-composure, and was once more able to consider all sides of the question impartially.

"Why, anything you want me to do," answered the 'coon, which was now descending. "Hold!" said Crockett, again raising his rifle; "only on one condition will I allow you to come down alive. You must promise to reveal to me the homes of as many valuable animals as you know of. If you will do this, I will spare your life, and see that your old age wants no comfort." The 'coon paused and considered awhile, but love of life overbalanced love of kind and kindred; and so he said "agreed." He then finished his interrupted descent, and fawned upon the hunter as any

little dog might. They left the stage greatly engrossed in their new-made friendship; and so the vision faded.

The other scene was enacted in almost total darkness. I gazed into the ebon mass for sometime without being able to distinguish anything. But at last I saw a faint, flickering light, slowly approaching. Nearer and nearer it came, until it was very close to me; and then again I heard the fatal click of a rifle being cocked. But ere the gunner had time to discharge his piece, a soft, soughing sound, apparently a sigh, stole from some invisible source out upon the black bosom of the night. Hold! that was no deer. Quickly, as I could see by the movements of the ghostly outline of this midnight hunter, as revealed by his flaming torch, he reshouldered his piece, and started in the direction whence the sound had come, and toward which he had intended to shoot. And when he came to the source of the mysterious noise, his light revealed a young, and very much frightened damsel. But by degrees the midnight deer stalker calmed her fears, and they left the stage arm in arm. As soon as the darkness-shrouded fantasy had vanished, and light had been restored, Amarynthia said: "That was the manner in which Daniel Boone was first introduced to his future bride. Real romantic, was it not?"

Soon as the representations illustrating the stories told of the two hunters had ended, Britomartis said: "I shall now give you some scenes that may make you feel rather queer. Did you

ever fancy yourself, in dreams, being two different persons, and in two different places, at the same time? Well, in what is to follow, you will be in just that predicament, for you are to be both an actor and a spectator. The scene is to be a portrayal of your first hunt, the day after you became the proud possessor of your first gun. And thus, while you lie here and observe it, you will share some of your thoughts and feelings with your other self, out there in action; and it will be the strangest sensation you ever did or ever will experience. But first, some preparation is necessary." And immediately the snow began to fall, in large fleecy flakes, and soon the ground was carpeted in white.

And then the hunt began. On the day previous my father had purchased for me my first gun—a small, single-barreled shot gun; and today was to decide whether or not I was worthy of it. But the novice has only a slender chance among wild game and experienced hunters; I could do little else than watch the others enviously, and wonder if ever I would reach such a degree of proficiency. Well, well, it does seem queer to be two persons at once! How could Dictynna remember and reproduce so exactly the happenings of that eventful day; or how did she come to know anything about it in the first place?

On swept the hunt; and although the real hunt lasted all day, and this picture of it, I suppose, only a few minutes, no incident seemed to be left out. Several kinds of game were shot, but mostly rabbits; and many indeed of these all-prayed-on crea-

tures started from the shelter of some snow-laden bush, or clump of grass or weeds, raising his caudal flag of truce to cover his retreat, only to have that time-honored symbol ruthlessly ignored by the blood-thirsty hunters, and to tumble heels over head into a snowy grave. Once more the nimble squirrel went slipping up the tree, on the side opposite the hunter; until, having reached its hole, it stopped, security-doomed, long enough to bark saucily once or twice at its pursuers, before plunging into safety, and also long enough to give the hunter time to kill it. Many were the coveys of quail and pheasants scared from their berth of the night before during that day; and they, not having stirred since the storm overtook them, offered, in their benumbed flight, an easy mark to the sportsmen. Once more Brother John shot his gun without knowing that there was some snow in the ends of the barrels, and lost about two inches of the muzzle thereby. In the meantime, everybody's bag began to get heavy, but mine; it continued to hang "flat as a flounder." But hope still lingered.

Along late in the afternoon, I became weary, having trudged through the deep snow all day long, without even firing my gun; and I began to lag behind the never-tiring sportsmen. Bye and bye, they were all so far away that I could barely hear the reports of their pieces, borne on the dead atmosphere. Presently my attention was drawn by some slight noise, and looking up I saw a hare hopping over the snow at no great distance from me. In a moment my ennui was dissipated, and I was all

trembling eagerness to kill the bunny. But I knew that it would be impossible, so long as he was in motion. At last he became still; and as I drew back the hammer, the click of the lock sounded to me as loud as an ordinary report, but luckily it did not frighten the hare. But just as I was getting ready to pull the trigger, he leaped again. This was repeated a number of times; until at last the rabbit was on the crest of the hill, in relief against the western sky, now made rosy by the setting sun. Now or never, for he is on the very brink of a burrow. Quickly getting aim, I drew the trigger. Bang! I looked to note the result; there the hare was still, but, instead of having dropped over dead, he had risen on his hind feet. As I stood, stupidly trying to solve the inexplicable condition of affairs, it slowly dawned on me that my gun had not been discharged; only the cap had burst. Would the hare remain until I could put on another? I got the box out of my pocket, but I was trembling so violently that I could scarcely open it. When at last the lid did fly off, half the caps were scattered over the snow. With numb, trembling fingers, I at last got one over the tube, and looked to see if the hare were gone? No! There he still sat; or was it only fantasy? Fantasy or not, I sighted quickly, closed my eyes tightly, and pulled the trigger. This time it shot!

Throwing my gun down, I ran to know the result. There on the blood-stained snow, with one of its large, sad eyes gazing reproachfully at me, lay

the dead hare. As one who knows he has committed an unpardonable error, I looked upon what I had done. Why indeed should the poor rabbit die; or if die it must, why was it not killed during the heat of the chase, when it was probably expecting death? But now, after having outwitted and outstripped its pursuers, and reached the very brink of safety, it was too hard! too hard! The baying of the hounds that had been used to chase the game around for the hunters, had now ceased, nor did I hear the men any more. The peculiar, solemn stillness of a winter sunset was upon the wood. An almost intolerable sorrow came over me, and before I knew what I was doing, I was down on my knees beside the dead rabbit, mingling my tears with the bloody snow, over the first living thing that ever met death at my hand. I had heard boys tell of their first hunts, and brag of the feelings of elevation and triumph that came over them at their first conquest; but I assure you that none such formed any part of my emotional complement on this occasion. When my passionate storm had subsided sufficiently to allow me to think, I took up the dead quarry, and as the best reparation that occurred to me, with gentle hands I lowered it into the burrow it had been too deliberate about entering of itself; and from that day to this I have never told anyone a word about it, and how Hecate found it out is a mystery to me. Well, of course I am hardened now, and the sight of a dead rabbit does not affect me much; but even now, when I recall

that scene, it is all I can do to keep a Scotch mist from forming in my eyes.

As soon as my other self, the snow, and all the paraphernalia of the last described phantasm had faded, and my bosom had ceased to heave with sympathetic passion, Eileithyia spoke again: "I will now," said Eleutho, "give you a representation of a feature that will be characteristic of the latter ages of my decline. To be sure, it will not happen as you shall view it—the result of centuries pressed into a few moments, but come it must."

Proserpine ceased speaking, and immediately, without even the cue of a magician's wand, so far as I could see, the air, the ground, and the branches of the trees, began to be flocked with birds. From every quarter of the heavens they came. They were of all shapes, sizes and colors. Every species of bird with which I was familiar, many that I recognized from what I had read or heard of them, and myriads of which I had never dreamed, were there. They ranged in beauty from the resplendent King-bird of paradise, to the crane; and in size, from harpies to humming birds. In fine, I suppose, as Ilithyia told me, one of every kind of bird that now, or ever, lives on the earth was present. But as I viewed with wonder and amazement this universal assemblage of the feathered kind, behold, sportsmen, armed with fowling pieces, appeared on every hand; and began to fire into the motley mass; and every bird, as it was hit, disappeared from view, and I saw it no more. With unabated zeal the firing continued, and in a remarkably short time

not one of all the innumerable flock remained; and this, Liberia told me, represented the extinction of the feathered tribe that must come bye and bye.

And so the birds were gone! No more plumage to flash in the bright sunshine; no more warbling to thrill out on the morning air, no more "groves of melody." And yet I thought, what is the use of the trees, which were still standing, if there are no birds to sing on the boughs. Kora seemed to read my thought, and in an instant not a tree was to be seen. And yet, she told me, they were as much destroyed by the treatises written for their preservation, as from any other cause; as thus while some poet would be howling "woodman spare that tree," for material on which to print his remarks a forest would be devastated.

No trees! No birds! I despair of conveying much of an idea of the feelings of forlornness and desolation with which this prospect, even in the most remote anticipation, filled me. And in this manner, then, must the now flourishing and beautiful earth, to indulge the whims of her darling, Man, so "wear out to naught?" For some minutes after the birdless, treeless, plain was exposed to view, Persephone, as if battling with her own feelings, did not speak; but at last she said: "When this stage shall be reached, my existence will very nearly have run its course; I shall have but a few more centuries to live; whereupon I shall be constrained to withdraw to the habitation of the Gods, and have only the companionship of the Immortals. Strange! that we of devine origin should so love

the earth, and the sordid praise of men; but it is so. However, it does no good to mourn; our nature is to suffer in silence.

"I shall now give you some of the features that shall characterize next to the last stage of my worship; wherein, indeed, my followers shall have but little better to sacrifice to me than insects; all the wild animals having been exterminated. And that this is exactly as it shall occur is proven by the history of all peoples. They fall upon the largest and fiercest animals first, and when these are gone, they attack the next largest. From what you have just seen, the annihilation of the birds, you may have come to despise the tendency of the deeds of my followers, although one of them yourself. I admit they are incited chiefly by the thirst of blood. But the desire to kill is implanted more or less firmly in every human breast, and it will evince itself; and the wise thing to do is to direct it against the life least valuable. If it were not for the opportunity men have of exercising this propensity on the lower animals, they would exercise it to a greater extent upon each other. But when the lower animals are all exterminated, unless man is by then refined of the barbarous trait, there will be pandemonium indeed! And thus, you see, the question, like all questions, has two sides; and in defense of my side, I can only say that some of the men who have placed the highest value on human life, were the very ones most energetic in the destruction of the lives of other animals. But we must hasten on, for I see the lethargy of your unconsciousness

passing slowly away; and when once it is gone, my spells and charms will be of no more avail." Oh! how I longed to be able to tell her that I would be well content to remain with her forever, but all in vain. "I will now give you selections from some kinds of hunting that have never yet been seen, but that will come in their natural sequence."

The next selection from the derogation of venery was represented as occurring in the twilight. Upon a slight grassy eminence stood three or four men, with guns in their hands. I noticed that they did not seem larger than ten-year-old boys; and the puerile sport of that distant, effete age consisted in shooting the bats that were flying around in the soft warm afterglow; and yet, it was picturesque. The crepuscular game at which they discharged their pieces seemed to be of several different kinds; from the blood-loving vampire, to the great bat. So long as they flew low enough down as not to rise above the horizon, and come in relief against the violet sky, they could not be seen, and were therefore safe. But sooner or later, in their silken flitting about, their instinctive, undulating manner of flight would assert itself, and they would render themselves certain prey to the sharp-eyed sportsmen. At last, all were killed but one, and he had profited by the fate of his fellows, and returned only at long intervals, and then skimming the earth closely. But the sportsmen of that period were a patient set; and finally the sole survivor, seeming either to discover that he was alone in the world, and to prefer death to being so, or else to determine to

try to shame the gunners for their ruthless cruelty, raised himself slowly into view, and there poised motionless. As the downy mass fell to the earth, riddled by the charge of each hunter, Leucophryne said: "Thus passed the bats."

"The next," said Limnaia, when the above-described scene had faded, "we will call the 'Slaughter of the Butterflies;'" and during its continuance I seemed to be looking upon another world, with other people in it, which it was impossible for me to connect or compare with anything I had ever seen or imagined. Suddenly all the air became filled with butterflies. There were many different kinds, colors and sizes, but all were beautiful. All Australia's splendor was represented. The blue-winged belle of Cashmere, the queen of her kind, in all her regal pride, towered above the throng. But the inevitable marksmen were there also. They were scarcely taller than large dolls, and their guns were hardly a foot long; but at every shot they seemed to bring down one of the gems of beauty. And during the slaughter even these gentle things became wild and frightened, and tried to escape their persistent destroyers; but all in vain; and presently all that remained of the race of beauty was the gold-dust they had shaken from their wings, and with which the air was filled.

Soon as the breezes had blown the last suggestions of the moths of day, the fine powder, into everlasting extinction, Limnaia said: "That was rather revolting, was it not? The next scene will represent the destruction of a race less etherial."

She ceased, and suddenly the air became filled with a network of fine webbing, which glistened in the sunshine. Upon this structure of delicate cordage began to appear an innumerable host of spiders. They were of all sizes, shapes and colors, from the largest to the smallest; and, as usual, appeared the diminutive sportsmen.

During the first part of the contest, the heavy, dull, saturnine things were, of course, an easy prey; but at last, seeming to become aroused to what was being done to them, those sluggish things became agile and wary as gibbons. And many and accurate were the feats of marksmanship performed and applauded by the dwarfish huntsmen in shooting them down from the highest part of the webbing, to which they had retreated. But nothing could avail. It was fate, and fate is inexorable. And so at last, but one of the spider kind remained, and he climbed to the highest accessible point, and towards him many shots were directed in vain. But at last some celebrated marksman of that advanced period managed to send an atom of lead through him; and he tumbled from his lofty perch, after his kind, into oblivion.

When this scene was done, and the invisible Hours were removing the tangled netting, Trivia said: "There! that revealed us in a less revolting light. Now, I have but one more scene to show you, in which will be involved visible kinds of game; after that will commence a strange kind of hunting indeed." She ceased, and suddenly a warm summer twilight diffused itself over the scene. Presently

I began to hear a low, humming sound; and looking closely, I saw a number of close-packed swarms of small gnats. As they flew slowly about, they changed their positions incessantly, like a number of drilled equestrians performing in a circus ring, only much more rapidly and intricately. Talk about animals thinking! And here was a band of the smallest visible things, each and every member of which seemed to be intent only on doing as much moving about as possible within the swarm, and yet the entire company constantly moving along in some definite direction. It was no bad illustration of the behavior of all the bodies of space, all moving freely about among themselves, yet all forever sweeping onward toward some destined goal. But the tiny sportsmen did not seem to pause long, to admire the exquisite grace and perfection of their performance. They began to fire into them at once, with their toy fowling-pieces. And before long the poor gnats had followed the other things into the all-devouring gulf of oblivion; and swarms of summer gnats, parading in the mellow afterglow, were known no more.

At the conclusion of this scene, Pherephote said: "Now, you have seen the extinction of all the visible things of a wild nature, just as it shall occur. But there are also small living things, invisible, that is, too small to be seen with the unaided human eye." I started. Things too small to be seen! I had never heard of such a thing. But of course there was no thought of doubting the word of my Goddess. There were, then, veritable

pixies. Without seeming to notice my amazement, Infernia continued: "And upon these my insatiable devotees will fall, as soon as they have exhausted the others. But the period of your unconsciousness has almost elapsed." (Is there a case on record, where anyone, having been rendered unconscious, wished to remain so; if there is not, and I suppose there is not, I would like to pose as an example of this metaphysical phenomenon) "And I shall have time to give you but one scene from the novel hunting; and even it may seem like a mere farce to you, you not being able to see the game."

Phoebe ceased, and I looked and listened. Presently along the small stream made by the overflow of the spring, the omnipresent sportsmen began to appear. They wore upon their noses queer looking objects, which I have since decided to have been magnifying glasses of some kind; and ever and anon they dropped to one knee, and shot into the water; but as I could see nothing for them to be shooting at, it of course seemed like a hollow farce to me. During the entire scene, the sun was in plain view, and it showed no brighter than Sirius does at present. And this, then, was the manner the hunters of that advanced period had of shooting amoeba, the paramoecium, the green euglena, the vorticella, and the scarlet volvox; but not, I suppose, the opalina.

As soon as they had disappeared, Libitina approached very close to me, and said: "Now, you have seen the last of me. Those last scenes were

scarcely worthy of a Patron Goddess, were they? And now, even for me, oblivion! Yes, I who have been worshipped before a thousand altars, under a score of different names, and in many countries, and by many different peoples, for centuries and centuries, am at last to be forgotten! Farewell!" And, her face filled with unutterable sorrow, she turned and walked slowly away; her nimble fawn, all unknowing, skipping along beside her. And thus passed Diana, the many-titled Goddess of the Chase.

I failed to mention in its proper place, what I considered, as it happened, a rather strange phenomenon. It was, that at the close of each of the last two scenes presented by Libitina, and just before Potamia began to speak, I had a faint glimpse of a view totally dissimilar; but in each case it faded before I was sufficiently impressed with it either to distinguish anything about it, or to recall it afterwards. But just as soon as Tergemina had ceased speaking for the last time, and had gone, it came full upon me, to fade no more. With some difficulty, I at last understood that I was in my own room, lying on the bed; my mother and someone else with me.

The cause of this change of scene, for the worse, I must say, is soon related. When I did not return from the spring as soon as I should, my mother's uneasiness, she knowing my incentive for haste, soon became active. Her first thought was that I had stolen out the gun, and gone hunting without performing the stipulated service; but no,

there lay the rifle in its usual place, above the door, and I had long since discarded the shotgun. My mother then determined to go to the spring; where she found me, sitting and reclining against the old sycamore, a wound upon my brow. Her cry for help brought the old hunter, whose ball had struck me, to the spot; and together they had carried me home. And so my beautiful entertainment by the Goddess of the Chase was but, as it were, a dream within a dream. Nevertheless, so *real* was her presence to me, that, on regaining consciousness, I could scarcely refrain from asking my mother whither she had gone, and if she saw her; and so deeply did her sorrowful exit impress me that for many weeks and even months thereafter my soul was desolate as the walls of Balclutha.

THE BOY AND THE DOVES.

One morn, before the sun, I wandered forth;
With what rich tapestry had Aurora hung
The east, in honor of his advent!
Entranced, I gazed; and even as I looked,
Above the rim his flaming orb appeared,
And for awhile how swiftly up the sky
His car did sweep! as if his noble steeds,
Phlegon, Eous, Ethon, and Erythros,
In the first mad burst of speed, after rest,
Could not be reined. And what a scene appeared
When his great light was turned upon the world!
On leaves and grass a thousand gems flashed out,
Which were not there before; or if, but dew.
And in each gem, if closely viewed, one saw
A miniature of the cloud-couched bow;
Observing which, thus to myself I mused:
God's signet in a dewdrop doth appear;
Hence, unto humblest things his love extends.
But as I mused, the sun was climbing up,
No time hath he for loitering by the way;

Noting which, and noting, too, a nearby hedge,
Into the latter I determined to creep,
The matutinal glory to prolong.
And this I tried, but difficult it was,
For rank and "robust" grew the spiny stems,
As grew those in that gloomy wood in which
The Florentine once found himself astray,
And which formed the border of the world.
But bye and bye, by dint of patient toil,
I gained the center of the thorny hedge;
Where all as yet was dewy, moist and cool.
And as I sank down on the cool, dank earth,
All by the hedge's thorny bounds locked in,
Thus did I muse: Well here's a spot at last,
Where never human footstep can intrude,
To break the placid waves of meditation;
Secluded as the stream where Dian bathed.
But scarcely had this thought uncharitable
Passed through my mind, when I caught a sudden
Gleam of yellow hair; toward whence it came
I turned my eyes; the hedge had intervened.
But in an instant more I saw him plain.
He was a boy of very tender years,
With laughing face and waving, golden locks;
And down an old abandoned road he came,
Beside the ruts of which the grass had sprung,
And which passed through the hedge; but which
I had not seen. And as along this road,
Care-free and joyous, passed the pretty boy,
The glory of the morning in his face,
I felt, as I had never felt before,
That thus did God condemn the solitary;

And that no spot of earth to *one* belongs
And *one* alone; where he may sit and brood,
And hide him from the eyes of other men.
And so the boy passed, now seen, now hid;
And now through sunshine, now through shadow, walked;
And still I kept my eyes upon his face,
When'er I could. But suddenly I heard
A great ado, as from some feathered thing;
Then at his feet a wounded bird, it seemed,
Fluttered along the ground in dire distress.
All in a moment was the boy transformed;
All action now, he chased the stricken bird.
As best I could, I watched. Alas for those
Who chase on foot the things that go by wing!
Faster ran the boy, faster flew the bird.
(Its wound, it seems, admitted of so much)
And ever, as the boy stretched forth his hand
To take the cripple up, it was not *there,*
But just a step beyond; and thus the bird
For quite a distance led the boy on.
The stratagem worked out, it took to wing,
And left the boy wond'ring; but not for long.
Whe'er he had played the game before or not,
Or had been told, or was by instinct lead,
I know not; but he at last returned
Back to the place where first he saw the bird,
And 'gan to look around.
Nor searched he long in vain; there stood a post,
Half hidden by the hedge, from which had swung
A gate in time, to close the hedge-gap up.

But now the gate was gone, and old the post;
Its top decayed; and on the top appeared
A ring of dry grass; and this the boy saw;
Its import soon devined, and closer drew.
And soon, by means of bars from post to hedge,
The venturous boy climbed up to the nest,
(I trembled as he climbed) and peeped within.
And then his joyous face the story told
Of what he saw. But, oh the great temptation!
Thrice towards the nest he stretched his dimpled hand;
And thrice I surely thought that I *must* speak;
But thrice he drew it back without the eggs.
Oh, how his little white palms must have itched,
To hold the clear-white things within them once!
But down too deep had mother's lessons sunk.
Alas! how frail a casket had those eggs.
Too slight, perhaps, to hold such precious gems;
And yet, not so, and here the moral is:
The dove against no enemy takes heed,
Neither night-robbers, nor the wrathful skies;
But builds for sunny days, and no mishap;
Seeming to have belief that these will come,
And these alone. And if mishap should come,
With sorrow only is the mother touched.
Yea, let come what must, treat her as you choose,
You stir no anger in her gentle breast;
For anger she knows not—this bird of peace;
And her earth-mission is to teach men peace.
Well, now my story is begun at last;
And thus it goes: From that eventful day,
When first the boy found the brooding dove,

Scarce passed a day, but that I back returned,
And took my station in the thorny hedge;
And found *him* there, or had not long to wait
Until he would appear, always alone.
If he were blessed with brothers or sisters,
He never brought them to the trysting place;
But all alone he watched the sitting bird,
And almost all the time; for oft he came
Before the sun his golden course began,
And played about; and oft he lingered near
Till tinted twilight soft, the lovers' hour,
O'er the warm earth her violet mantle drew.
And to his presence soon the birds grew used,
Feared him no longer; would sit on the nest
With him so nearby that he might have reached.
And bye and bye the couplets were disclosed;
And then his joy began. No prouder were the birds
Of the callow, tawny twins than was the boy.
And with them, too, he shared the catering cares;
And much I feared that he might overfeed
The ever-hungry fledglings; but this, it seemed,
Could not be done. And oh! how lovingly
Would he hang over his fast-growing pets,
And gently stroke them with his finger-tips!
And never seemed to think a time would come
When they must part, to meet, alas! no more.
And all the while the mother bird approved,
And on the post-top she would walk about,
What time the boy fed her babies grubs;
Close-pattering with her little crimson feet,
And nodding gracefully her glossy neck.
And now the babes were old enough to fly,

My fears said, and only lacked the courage;
And what would happen when they took to wing
I scarce dared think. The boy, to be sure,
Seemed never to give time to such a thought.
And oft I asked, and always still in vain,
If e'en he *knew* what must become of them.
And hence, one night, as nearer drew the time
When the love-feast must end, I could not rest;
But left my sleepless couch and sought the hedge.
There sat the dove, beside her full-grown young,
All in the moonlight, for the moon was full.
And as with sorrow I the trio viewed,
I heard a sudden noise, and stepped aside
Into the shadow of the friendly hedge;
And looked and listened; not without reward.
Along the grass-grown road a figure stole,
Clothed in a snow-white gown; it was the boy!
On, on he came, straight towards his sleeping pets;
Climbed up the bars, and gazed upon the three
A good long while; then softly climbed he down,
Retreated as he came, and looked not back.
Was it fact or fancy? Did the boy come
To have a last look at his feathered friends,
Ere they must part forever? (For now
As shone the full moon on his sweet young face,
Methought I saw the stamp and seal of grief)
Or was it all but shapes fantastical,
Distilled from pure moonshine? I do not know.
Well, in the morning, early I repaired
To my stand within the hedge, and looked about.
But alas! no signs of life appeared;
The nest was empty, nor was the boy there.

And I began to fear that I had come
Too late to see the parting scene. But just
(For I both wished and not wished to be there
When last they met) as I was wondering
If he had come that morn, or if the night
Before had been the last time he had seen
His full-fledged pets, and scarcely knowing whether
To feel disappointed or relieved,
I heard a sound, and saw a gleam of white
Flash through the narrow vistas of the hedge,
And down the grass-grown road the boy came,
His face all smiles. Alas! he did not know!
On, on, he came, and climbed upon the bars,
And gazed into the nest; and then, oh God!
How great a change came o'er that happy face!
Quick climbed he down, gave one swift glance around,
Then covered with his hands his troubled face;
Burst into sobs and groans, turned round, and fled.
Which space I stood within the hedge transfixed.
All sights and sounds my eyes and ears shut out,
Save the grief-struck boy and his loud lament.
Yes, e'en as one, while o'er the printed page
His eye is glancing, sometimes finds a thought,
Containing such a grand and perfect truth,
Or so o'er-glossed with fancy's fairy light,
Or with a figure so obscure and quaint,
That for a space it filleth all the mind
So full, that if we try to read, we coast,
See the faint words, but grasp their meaning not;
And thus it was my eyes beheld but him,

Though tears were not, their wonted sight to dim;
And ears heard nothing but his sad complaint.
But even in these sounds spake Hope divine,
As though she never could be killed;
And still, as fainter grew the boy's moan,
I heard a voice that said, or seemed to say:
"Despair not, oh ye 'who have loved and lost'!"
For somewhere will you find your love restored,
And purged of earthly faults, whate'er on earth
Caused your estrangement; e'en though *she* herself,
In birth's proud arrogance, saw fit to scorn
The peasant-parented boy's rough address;
Or whether grim, despotic death did lay
His icy hand on young affection's pulse;
In fine, whatever *here* hath dared obstruct
The course of true love in its heavenly flow,
All *there* will be removed, nor will *she* scorn.
Your souls are mates; else, you had never loved.
Then, let hope guide you, though the way seem long;
Though wings come slowly, they will come at last."
The voice ceased; the boy's cry was hushed,
Against a mother's bosom, let us hope;
And to my eyes and ears the sights and sounds
Of life came back. Alas! how flat and dull
Seemed everything; the glamour of affection
Was gone. I looked, and scarcely knew the place.
How quick indeed the little play had died!
(E'en as a brighter faded years before.)
And of the fairy drama naught remained,
But the poor recluse and his morning stroll.
As one that walks in sleep, I left the place.

IN FROZEN ARMOR.

My Grandmother was the most complete edition of traditional stories of all kinds that it has ever been my happy chance to meet. All those legends which depend for their perpetuity on fireside transition from memory to memory—and in her day they were vastly more numerous than now—found in her a most ready champion. All her tales were indexed and folded away in their special memory-niches as neatly and compactly as the tiny petals are pressed in the rosebud. Indeed, for one of her years, her memory's sheet was most clearly written; no pages in pi, no lines near the bottom margin thumbed into illegibility, no leaves missing and no pages blurred by the mental twilight of age.

Her repertory contained stories of almost all sorts; and notwithstanding the fact that she could neither read nor write even her own name, many of them contained no small depths of knowledge, and some of them, especially the fairy tales and fables, I have since seen in print.

Being of a generation, the members and im-

mediate ancestors of which were the actors in wresting her part of the country from the clutch of "forest primeval," she could relate, of course, no small deal of frontier experience. She seemed all through her long life to have been blessed with a very vivid memory; from which the slightest detail of personal experience, observation, or the remotest conversation, that touched it was never free again. But her stock of folk-lore and fairy tales she must have become acquainted with, in some way of which I have been unable to learn, before she came west; for there were no books, and no minds, as I remember, at that time in our part of the country, which contained them. And thus it was, that, had I not had from her the nursery legends of fairies, giants, goblins, stick-and-string houses, talking chairs, Jacks, altitudinous bean stalks, etc., said to be salutory for unfolding minds, part of my mental development might have remained a blank.

Later reading has made, for me at least, a phrase in one of her stories an inexplicable coincident.

In her edition of the airy fiction of Jack and his heaven-kissing bean-stalk, while that enterprising steeple-climber was in the Giant's lofty home, his (the Giant's) wife, in order to forestall the cannibalistic proclivities of her returning husband, ensconced the intrepid Jack under the wash-boiler. The pot, however, was not impervious to the odor of blood, and the same caught the Giant's keen nose; and to all his wife's efforts at allaying his

sanguinary suspicions he replied in one set phrase, "Fie, foh and fum, I smell the blood of a British man." There is no manner of expressing the surprise which I felt, when, years later, I found Poor Tom filling the mouth of "Child Rowland," on his advent to the "Dark Tower" with the same inexorable words. How came she and the first of the great Sons of Light, even whose name she could scarce possibly have heard, with the same phrase?

Waiving whatever disparagement her excellence in my opinion as a narrator may have suffered from later rivals, there was a time when I thought her the greatest story-teller in the world; and I would hang about her chair in the long winter evenings or pleasant summer ones, while her gentle voice kept time with her knitting needles, or with the pieces of apples falling into the tub as she cut them for drying, while I did the paring, and gave her credit for doing her full part in relieving the lonesomeness of a childhood without brothers or sisters.

But one thorn grew in the midst of my Eden, which required long and patient work to eradicate. Even in the tense climax of her most solemn stories, she would often be obliged to break suddenly off, and I would see the rays of breaking smiles illumine her kind face; and then, with a stupid start, I would realize that, in my complete absorption, I had been, with my own mouth, following her every movement; and the ludicrousness of the pantomime had been too much for the good lady's composure.

Being, as before mentioned, a dweller in a

comparatively new country, in her tales the ignis fatuus, the incubus of superstitious ignorance, was not, of course, omitted. But in her story—and I never heard her tell but one—of which this natural phenomenon formed the nucleus, strange to say, the element of "charm," so prominent in many of them, was entirely lacking. Its motive seemed to be the inculcation of punctuality in bending to the parental injunction, and of courage in the presence of any kind of mysterious danger. The hero, or rather the very unheroic human factor, was one little "Willie Austin," a character, so far as I can learn, wholly fictitious, and one about whom all sorts of eerie suggestions might easily cling. His encounter with the Will-o'-the-Wisp occurred at some indefinite date in the forgotten past. He had been sent by his mother on some culinary errand to a neighbor's house, at a considerable distance. On his way home he loitered till dusk overtook him. He had looked back, whereupon he perceived a large, revolving ball of glowing fire advancing rapidly towards him. Terrified at the unusual sight, he began to run and cry simultaneously, but the fiendish fire followed him with malicious persistency; and, he having lost his way through fright, it pursued him through all sorts of terrible places; until at last, overcome by fear and fatigue, he had fallen on his back between two prostrate tree trunks. The implacable globe of annihilation had then come and hovered about his face, smothering him and singeing away his hair and eyebrows; and thus he was found, dead, on the following day.

With such stories as this did they instill juvenile obedience in the good old days, when the rod was not spared. The part of the story intended to inspire courage rested in the assertion, that, if instead of fleeing from the fire, Little Willie had boldly pursued it, it would have fled before him; and, after chastening him soundly for his disobedience, by leading him through difficult places, it would harmlessly have vanished.

Concerning that other popular superstition about the Will-o'-the-Wisp, which I heard later, and in which the primitive gaslight is given less truculent characteristics, indeed, its only aggression consists, not in following at the "Laborer's heel homeward returning," but in obliging the benighted unfortunate to follow it, and even this attraction is cancelled by the simple expedient of turning one's pockets inside out—my grandmother did not seem ever to have heard. Of all her stories, the one transmitting the sad fate of Little Willie sank deepest into my memory, recurred most frequently to my thoughts, and, cost me most dearly.

I am by nature a Nimrod. If my parents had told me any fabulous stories about my being born with a gun, trap, or any other symbol of venery, in my hand, I should have never doubted them in the least. Since the days of our last illustrious patron, Daniel Boone, none of his disciples have, I believe, wrought with a truer passion for his approbation.

My earliest memories are of some hare or partridge that I had ensnared, and of seeing the glamour

of its wildness fade in my hand. Innumerable are the times when I have wished that I might have lived my life some fifty years ago, when the country abounded in game of a size and fierceness worthy of a hunter's skill and courage; innumerable are the times when I have cursed the fate that decreed to my cunning and enterprise merely the remnants—the largest of which are the raccoon and fox—of the glorious, universal chase that followed the course of conquest across the New World; innumerable are the times when I have importuned —and always in vain—my parents to move to newer regions, in search, as Daniel would have phrased it, of "elbow room and larger game."

But yet, though I did regret that the conditions were thus unfavorable for the full unfolding of my talent, I did not despair, but made the best of matters as I found them. I tried all the kinds of hunting that the residue of game permitted of, and liked them all; but candor constrains me to confess that no sort so much engrossed my liking as that of hunting the "coon." My strong love of solitude, perhaps, as much as anything else, served to recommend this kind of hunting to my pastime. My choice time, place and manner of indulging in the sport were: first, a calm, cloudless night, moderately cool, with only the stars for illumination—the kind of a night created by an adult moon scaling the eastern heavens may be all right in assisting some poet, whose only stock in trade is beauty, to tap his pregnant muse; or in touching up some lover's eloquence, but there is no sublimity in it. The

best place for finding the game is generally in low, level bottom country; and the only companion I ever wanted with me was a well-trained dog. Thus would we, my dog and I, sally forth. And thus, with nothing to break the star-lit silence but the barking of my dog, the occasional eerie squeak of a flying squirrel, as he described his declined plane from tree to tree, or the hootings of the owls, those weird denizens of the night, I would fancy the tableau of primeval solitude most fully realized.

When the unerring, indefatigable labors of the dog had at last succeeded in threading the devious labyrinths of the quarry's trail, and determined in which tree it was, I would make the best possible speed to him; and then usually followed the thrilling excitement of a dangerous climb; the coon often, having been safely reposing in one of the lowest crotches, ascending just above me, until he had gone as high as he could, and then if the smallness of the branches prevented my getting close enough to him to make him jump out, I would break off a bough, and present my hat to him on the end of it; at which shocking overtures he would invariably loosen his hold and drop into the fatal abyss of hushed expectancy; and then for a while the mingled cries of pain and rage would mince the silence, during which time I would remain in my lofty perch, almost too excited to breathe, until the death rattle of the quarry would announce that the end was near, whereupon, with more caution than I had observed in climbing up, I would descend, and usu-

ally find the faithful old dog picking the burs out of his dead victim's fur.

As for any other method of getting the coon out of his tree, such as shining his eyes with a light, and shooting him, building a fire and throwing half-burned, blazing sticks at him, or imitating two coons fighting, until he would jump out, tying my coat around the tree, and going back next morning, or felling the tree, I always scorned as evincing a sad lack of both courage and fair play. Whenever a coon chose a tree that I could not climb, and that was not often, he was safe from me for that night.

Such were the scenes and adventures that filled my youthful ideas of rapture to the brim, and for indulgence in which I spent every permission that I could win, often with long and tearful pleading, from my more discreet parents.

One typical night in November I pursued my favorite pastime. It was a night most auspicious for the shining of the stars. Never did I see the heavens more radiantly bespangled. The tiny, dim-seated star, apparently embellishing the very outer margin of the azure concave, that did not on that night make its weak rays pierce the earth's fleecy mantle of vapor, and reveal its momentary splendor to the unaided human eye, never, I believe, performed that feat. It was the kind of night most favorable for gazing fixedly on those seemingly desert spaces of the welkin, and being rewarded by bringing into birth, as it were, myriads of diminutive astral points, thereby rendering them the most thickly sown of all the fields of air; and

of looking longer, and seeing others yet more deeply imbeded in the bosom of space, which can only be made to come and go, and of being left to wonder whether they were really stars in heaven or only on the tired eyes.

Under all this celestial wealth, with calm, deliberate steps I strolled, at an age when I had not yet dared to do anything but look up and love, and before I had acquired the critical audacity of viewing them through fancy's films—oh impious innovation!—all of a size, or all of a brightness, and of being obliged to confess at last that I could suggest no improvement; or, oh criminal climax! of seeing how many sorts of geometrical figures I could construct by using them as points between which to fancy lines, which figures to the eye would appear correct as to measurements.

I had proceeded for some distance into the forest, and as yet nothing had occurred. My dog I had neither seen nor heard since entering the wood, and I was just becoming slightly impatient and astonished that something did not come to pass. The story of little Willie Austin had been recurring to my mind with fitful inconstancy, and I had wondered if there were really lights, ignited by no human hand, and officered to wander about the earth, the scourge of cowards, and to follow persons of slight courage to destruction. Something caused me to turn my head, and there, oh God! I saw it. In an instant all my doubts concerning its existence were scattered to the winds; for there, scarce ten feet from me, skulking about among the

massive tree-boles, lurked the ignis fatuus. How unstable a thing is man! and a boy especially. For instance, one moment I was walking along in infinite repose and self-possession, and the next, every part of me was trembling with fear, and my rising terror well nigh smothered me. The light fascinated me as a flame is supposed to do a moth; I could not remove my eyes. Like the intervention of devine providence to break the evil charm, came from the opposite direction the clearcut, decisive barks of my dog. Never did his voice sound so sweetly.

With infinite relief, and an unnatural sprightliness in my legs, I turned to go to him. Yes, the ignipotent apparition seemed almost to have disembodied me, and it was with difficulty that I could keep my feet on the ground. My fears had fitted me with wings, and I was just about to yield to their urgency for a test, when wait! On the ground immediately before me, I saw, though perhaps with the kindly aid of a frightened fancy, as plainly as ever I saw the moon, the conclusion of Little Willie's mad chase. I saw his pale, thin, clinched hands stretched helplessly beside him. I saw his ghastly staring eyes, his twitching mouth and trembling cheeks, while the ruthless fire was doing its fatal work. It was a terrible moment! Should I likewise be chased through briars and water to some dismal recess of the wood, and there smothered?

My despair at this prospect took all the Ariel out of me. Just at this moment came a shout from some one, apparently to my still barking dog. I

might run to them and be safe. But no! it might cause me to miss them. I dared to look at the light again. Heavens! It was almost upon me, and it looked like a fiend, replete with eyes. I must act. And thus it was that, scarce knowing what I did, moving my leaden limbs with difficulty, covering my face with my hands, and half fearing that the light would not recede before me, I actually began to approach it, with slow steps; and even as I advanced I feared that it would perceive the courage I was exhibiting to be wholly assumed; and within my heart there was nothing but fear and trembling.

However, I still went forward, and the light apparently recoiled before me. Comfort! A few steps brought me to the water's edge. It was a somber, currentless bayou, that reposed its sluggish curves upon the bosom of the wood. Its depth at that particular point I knew not; but I did know that swimming was not one of my accomplishments. But would it be politic to perhaps lose the gained ground by seeking, likely in vain, for a foot-log? Standing on the brink I debated the question for a moment; and then, having decided in the negative, I began to break the thin sheet of ice on the water's surface, and wade slowly in. Ugh! How the cold element, as it rose higher upon my legs at every step, sent the blood scurrying to my heart! Higher and higher, the freezing fluid came, now to my knee, now to my thigh, now to my breast, and now to my mouth! Knowing myself unable to swim a stroke, I paused. What was to be done? The op-

posite bank seemed so near that I resolved to make one wild leap for it; and I did the best I could, with my benumbed limbs in the cold water. I was wholly submerged, and when I reached solid footing at last, I shook the water out of my eyes with hopes that the glim might have relented. But no! Over the dark, dancing ripples of the disturbed water, still glimmered the Foolish Fire.

When I reached the opposite bank, dripping and shivering, I found it covered with a seemingly impenetrable growth. I now realized that I was trying to force an entrance into what we always called the "take-your-time" thicket, the most impervious little coppice I ever knew. It was circular in shape, almost entirely surrounded by the bayou, and in its center stood a large oak tree. Its chief growth was vines, briars, brambles, canes and small saplings, all growing in wild redundancy; and altogether it looked so forbidding that I never had attempted to explore it even by daylight. But *then* it was different. As I forced my way into it by sheer strength—sometimes crawling on my hands and knees, and sometimes climbing over bushes and underbrush—the wild grape vines, dangling from the matted tops of the low shrubs, wound their slender arms about my waist to restrain me; and when I tried to break or remove them, the spiney briars and brambles lanced my hands painfully. Nevertheless, foot by foot, I wedged myself through. I had by this time shaken off some of the fear I at first entertained of the Friar's Lantern not fleeing from me; and my wet, clinging,

ice-cold garments also stimulated my actions.

Bye and bye, the thicket, with scarcely no warning, abruptly ceased; and at once I found myself free of its tenacious grasp. With a feeling, as nearly of relief as anything could be, not to be the real relief, I started to run; when, oh star-sparkling darkness! something made me hide as many of my tracks as my length would cover, and set a thousand bells ringing in my head. As soon as I could, I sat up, putting my hands on my head to discourage the campanology still going on within. I tried to understand what had happened. As well as I could make out, in my dazed condition, I had had a head-on collision with the center-piece oak.

As soon as I had rubbed the stars out of my eyes sufficiently to remark it, I could not help admiring the venerable patriarch against which I had hurled myself. It was of the variety sometimes known as "overcup." It stood on a slight eminence, covered with dead grass; and I thought it then (and later observation confirmed the opinion) as picturesque a specimen, in the thickness, shortness and gnarliness of the trunk, and in the crookedness of the boughs, as ever Robin Hood and his merry men slumbered beneath. But slight time had I then for admiring model trees. The relentless Will-o'-the Wisp still had its terrible eye upon me; and, was it approaching? Yes! Of all things, through the places I had just threaded. No! I would take my chances on following the light through the other side of the thicket.

I had no sooner began to really utilize the

I found the other side no easier to get through than the one through which I had just come. But slowly, by dint of patient perseverance, I made my was through its unkempt conglomeration; leaving scarcely any evidence of my passage but blood and shreds of clothing. I was just emerging into the open woods, when from the low, leafy branches of a top-blasted oak, directly in front of me, came the most blood-curdling screech that I ever heard. It barely sufficiently resembled in tone the cry of the owl for me to know, after a moment, that it came from that bird; and yet it was as different from its conventional interrogatory as could well be imagined.

Well, I would never recommend, even in its smoothest and most agreeable tones, the voice of Minerva's gruesome pet as an antidote for glowing nerves; and when it chooses, it could, I fancy, bring the most submerged pair of nerves that ever left their owner in ignorance of their existenc, from their profound repose, and make them twang like Apollo's catgut. The fearful sound seemed to come from all around. The very earth seemed to tremble and recede before it. Under my wet cap, I felt my wet hair begin to "rouse and stir as life were in it." To swerve aside in passing it might excite in the light suspicions of lack of courage in me. I must go directly under it. Oh horror! what feelings surged through my soul as I passed under the tree occupied by the bird of wisdom, I will not attempt to say. Suffice it, that I do not wish, at any future time, to experience them again

heightened nimbleness into which my fear was converted as soon as I was well past its source, holding my hands before my face, as I ran, to keep the brush out of my eyes, and to lessen the shock of a possible second collision, than in an instant everything became as bright as if the full moon had been reigning in mid-sky. At first I thought that it was the moon, breaking suddenly from behind a cloud, and flooding the earth with her argent radiance. But before I had time either to look up, or to remember that the moon was not then in the sky, the shadows cast by the strange light began, not to fade, but to grow rapidly longer, and to veer slightly to one side. Alarmed, I looked up at the sky, and saw, stretched obliquely across a portion of it, a broad, bright band of light. As I gazed a loud report capped the terrible scene; and for the first and last time in my life, as my memory serves, I actually screamed with terror.

And yet, almost as I did so, I realized that the light was merely what I had been taught to call a "shooting star"—of unusual brilliancy; and that the report was apparently that of a gun. Nevertheless, it was something fearful for a moment, and I never saw anything to equal it, either before or since. It was the only time that I ever saw shadows cast by some heavenly body, moving freely about, not through the agency of the object casting the shadow, but effected by the subject causing it; and that, too, at a time when moving shadows were not so common as now. In that instant, I think, every little misdeed I had done up to that time,

magnified a thousand-fold, passed in incriminating review before me.

Were even the far-seated stars, I tremblingly asked, that I had loved so deeply, the slaves of evil, and fated to assist in working my ruin? Even now, as I recall the experience, I feel rather queer. But later reading has added to it one fancy of which I did not then think. It is: that whoever first thought of that fable about the even-pacing pads of the sun, under the coachmanship of the novice, Phaeton, breaking their sober gait which had regulated the sands of time for so long, and whirling the chariot of day madly across the sky, while the astonished shepherd saw the shadows of himself and crook chase each other in a semiradius before him, might have found a not inapt inspiration in such a phenomenon.

Weak and trembling with my fright, scarcely able to stand, I yet contrived to struggle on; and now I began to wonder if it were not about time for the Light, according to legend, to vanish. Perhaps I had not been advancing rapidly enough towards it to convince it of the genuineness of my courage. What if, being able to read the hoax of my nerve, it should not fade at all, but should lead me about the entire night, through scenes similar to those I had passed, or perhaps more terrible. Gods! The thought put new vigor into my limbs. With rebraced sinews, I began to run. And yet the more effort I put forth, the more slowly I seemed to cover the ground. As one in a dream, the trees seemed to swim hastily past me, and yet I could

make no speed. Quickly, however, it began to tell in my breathing. The frosty air whistled through my mouth, and hurt my lungs. At last I began to come to the margin of the wood. The trees were smaller and more sparse, and still my fulgent fate drew me on. Presently I came to a rail fence, and in getting over it I first became aware of the fact that my clothes were frozen stiff. Thus, while my cheek burned, and the sweat poured off my brow, my outside garments were as stiff as the soles of a new pair of brogans. I was like a fire-ball swathed in icy sheets. But I had no time to thaw them just then, and so, in *frozen armor,* I ran on in the bright wake of "Friar Rush."

When I climbed the rail fence, I dropped into a cleared field, which I crossed at a sweeping pace. Evidently, I was coming near some habitation. Oh esperance! When I had crossed the field, I came to another rail fence, to the top of which I climbed, and jumped off on the other side; and the pandemonium that ensued left me to believe that I had landed on a berth of sleeping swine. Necessarily, then, I was in some man's hog-pen, so I lost no time in getting out. At some distance from the stye, I came to a fence of high, pointed pickets, which I crossed with some difficulty. As soon as I was over the pales, I realized that I was either under enchantment, or in someone's back yard; and the light seemed to have taken refuge in his house. Almost too dazed to know what I did, I still staggered on,—somewhat retarded by the welcoming chuck given me by the clothes-line under the chin—

toward the window through which the light was streaming.

In my frenzy I actually ran my head through the pane, and then the great esotery was cleared up. Among the swimming objects that presented themselves to my bewildered eyes, in the bright room, I had a clear impression of a small kitchen lamp, hanging on the opposite wall, with a highly polished pie-pan reflector behind it. And I had a more faint one of a girl, engaged in washing dishes, who, upon my uncivil introduction, dropped the piece which she was washing, and fled, screaming, from the room. And then, all in a moment, the preternatural vigor which so far had upborne me so superbly, deserted me utterly. My grasp on the window relaxed, and I fell supinely. Yet I felt no pain. For a moment the stars jerked uneasily over me, then I had a sensation of something warm and soft being drawn across my face, and of something frisking about me; and then, as if on downy wings, I was borne slowly and painlessly into the realms of unconsciousness.

My first impressions on awakening were, of a medley of odors, camphor, turpentine, salves and ointments; of being tucked away warmly in bed; and of kind faces all around me.

Well, of course explanations were in order, as soon as I felt able to make or hear them, for it appeared that they also had some. Two of the sons from the house where my wild chase terminated had been hunting that night, and it was one

of them who had answered my dog. They also went to him, and waited and wondered why I did not come. They were still waiting, trying to shine the coon's eyes with a bulls-eye lantern, when the bright meteor, brilliant as it was brief, flashed across the sky; and the elder of them, so far from being scared, really had the presence of mind to see and shoot the quarry by its light. And they had also heard some one scream. My dog, too, no sooner saw the "varmint" dead, than he broke from them. Alarmed at the occurrence, the boys had started in the direction taken by the dog, which happened to be towards their home. Not seeing anything further of him or me, they had come on to their house, arriving there but a short time after myself.

Of course, there was an infinity of laughter at my expense for the ridiculous mistake, but not all of it was derisive, for the story, like most stories, had two sides; and while my mistaking the gleam of a lamp for the ignis fatuus was ludicrous enough, yet the fact that I had had courage enough to follow it was not overlooked. And I never hinted but that my pursuit, even to running my head through the pane of glass, was the result of my inveterate enmity to everything of its ascribed fiendish nature, and of my burning devotion to science; and that my syncope was merely the effect of extreme exhaustion. Even considering it from the standpoint that the little girl, who was drying the supper dishes, was the one in whose heart I was at that time most desirous of building up a school boy's

love, in which, in latter years, I most consummately succeeded, I can scarcely be said to have lost in the chase.

But of all who heard, or ever will hear, the story, it effected my Grandmother perhaps the most strangely. As the toils and terrors of the pursuit were related to her, she glowed with excitement; but when the puerile catastrophe was reached, her enthusiasm fell like boiling mercury in a snow-storm. Her disappointment at the light not being the real thing was too great for her to see anything laughable in the conclusion. Indeed, the story proved to distaste to such an extent, that she asked us never to mention it to her.

THE DEWDROP AND THE SUNBEAM.

A dewdrop on a lily's petal hung,
One splendid morning as the Sun arose:
A ray of light passed through the dewdrop then,
And straightway changed it to a flashing gem;
Yea, with the diamond's reddest gleam it burned,
And cast its radiance out on every side.
Now, this, it seems, should surely be enough
To realize the very height of pride;
But ne'ertheless, the dewdrop thus complained:
"Oh! this is surely life's meridian.
In many different forms I have appeared,
But never aught like this; yes, I have been
Driven in the black cloud across the sky;
Frozen in the iceberg's emerald spire,
When 'gainst it shone the pale and lifeless sun;
I've danced along with merry foam-fringed waves,
Across the bosom of the restless deep;
From out the geyser's crater I've been thrown,
And spouted high in air as vaporous steam;
Nay, in the little rustic, loitering brook,

O'er golden sands and polished pebbles flowed;
Yea, my tiny self hath e'en formed a part
Of the sweet seven-colored cloud-couched bow.
But all these things are nothing, when compared
With the sparkling luster that I now cast out.
"But oh sad thought! This glory cannot last,
For momently I feel myself grow less.
And thus it has been all my life along,
The loveliest forms were still the soonest gone,
"But even this sad fate I could endure
Were there but some *one* near to see me now,
And praise my shrinking splendor. But alas!
For birds and bees and tawdry butterflies
Alone to see me! Why doesn't some *one* come?
Some lovely woman, with her laughing eye,
Wand'ring thus early from her sleepless couch,
Looking for brightness; who in me should find
A lustre equal to her own bright eyes.
For still, so far as I can understand,
The foremost business of all things on earth
Is to please woman ,and to win her smile—
But oh vain thought! unseen I am to die,
And no one is to view the liquid gem!"
Now, it so chanced as thus the dewdrop *felt,*
The tiny sunbeam that passed through its heart
The feeling caught, and on its backward course,
To its great source the dewdrop's feeling bore.
The Sun no sooner understood the thing,
Than, with smiles o'errunning all his jolly face,
Using the sunbeam as a messenger,
To the proud dewdrop thus his mind expressed:
"Ho! ho! my tiny friend, and dost thou wish

That man should see thee in thy present state?
And dost thou think it scarce worth while to shine,
However bright, unless thou canst be seen?
Why, think of me, suppose that I should say,
'I'll only shine when I am gazed against!'
How quickly should the world be void of light,
And all the days be muffled up in dark!
But as you say, you would be seen of *man*.
My friend, renounce that idle, pride-born thought.
Suppose that *ten* men should pass near your fire,
'Tis ten to one, not *one* of them would see
The lustre that you hold unparalleled;
For why? Hath pride so blinded you,
Are you with your own radiance so bedazzled,
As not to see that all around you hang
Ten thousand gems, and each as bright as you?
"And then suppose by *man* you should be seen,
What the result? A glance, but n'er a thought;
For to *men's* eyes a dewdrop's not a gem;
No, *he's* disgusted with their *commonness*.
And as for woman, what! have you not heard,
The jewels that *she* loves are palpable.
"Again, my little friend, but think of this:
Suppose that near your gleam some *man* had come,
Some man that had not lost his youthful love
Of the bright things upon the dewy leaves
That drew his boyish eyes, suppose that he
Had passed before thee. and admired thy fire;
Why, now, perchance, the youthful mystery
Would have been cleared up ,and now he would have known
That 'tis my sunbeam, rather than yourself,

That makes the glory; that without *that,*
Thou wouldst be nothing but a drop of water.
"And yet, my little friend, do not despair;
Still sparkle on, for I will lend thee light;
And never think your beauty shall be lost,
Because man sees it not. The eye of God
Drinks in the whole of every splendid sight;
His kindly ear, the songs of solitude;
Nor tone nor ray is lost. Shine then for God,
(Who never doth complain of commonness)
Unmindful whether man beholds or not."
The jolly Sun his flaming counsel ceased,
And bent his eye to gather the effect.
Alas! alas! the dewdrop was no more;
The spot was dry whereon it late had gleamed;
The warmth of his advice had kissed away its object.

THE HUMAN HOAX.

The harvesting was over. The four long sultry days of toil and sweat and hurry were done for another year. Considered from a purely aesthetic standpoint, the scene had suffered from the shearing. What had been fields of gently rippling gold, that waved with every breeze, being now spaces of unsightly stubble, thickly set with shocks of grain. But ever thus, I suppose, must beauty be sacrificed to necessity; and there was not a man in the group of toilers present that would not have told you the fields looked better as they were.

It was about the middle of the afternoon, and the released harvesters were taking their ease in the shade of a walnut grove that grew in a corner of one of the fields. Some of the older men were estimating the yield; some of the others were rubbing out heads between their palms, cleaning it by blowing the chaff from it as they poured it from one hand to the other, and eating it; while yet others were lying quiet on the unshocked sheaves, resting. I

was gazing down across the field, wondering in vain in my boyish way, why it was that the line where the spaces cut on opposite sides of the field came together, by the different appearance of the bright stubble, as the sun shone on it, could be detected so easily, when some on said:

"Yonder comes Andrew Bell."

I looked up quickly, and with pleasure; for of all the men that wrought a spell over my youthful imagination, that of Andrew Bell was the most perfect. He was the neighborhood story-teller, and while he was universally condemned as a complete idler, yet there was not a man, women or child who did not, as often as they had the chance, listen with entire interest to whatever he had to say. But to me he was the personification of genius, a to-be-worshipped something, beyond my power to equal or imitate. Was he indeed a genius, stranded by lack of education, or practical application of his talents? Where he obtained his stories if he did not invent them, I do not know. As to their worth, I am unable to decide; hence, I determined to reproduce the following from the ones I remember, in as nearly his own words as possible; and by its reception, or rejection, judge whether this unusual character was really some "mute inglorious,"—Dickens—for he seldom indulged in poetry, or merely an imposter on the crude taste of his auditors. "Judge when you hear."

He was no sooner well among us, and had saluted and been saluted by all, and had made some highly original remark about the harvest seeming to

be about over, than some one said: "Yes, and tell us a story to commemorate it."

"Well, I will," he continued, "that is, if you have not already heard all I know." He was never taken aback; never tapped, and found dry or unwilling; never obliged to resort to apology. And I used to wonder if his never-failing readiness was the result of previous meditation, or only his facile unpremeditation.

"I suppose," he continued, "you have all heard how the phonograph or talking machine was first introduced into White County." This is a universal way story-tellers have of prefacing their narratives; while even as they say it, they think, or at least hope, that no one has heard it. We all vigorously assured Andrew that not the slightest intimation that the "talking machine" had even been introduced into White County had ever reached us, which affirmation, I suppose, was strictly true; whereupon, he proceeded:

"Well, I was living up in White County at the time, and I thought it made its debut under rather unfavorable circumstances than otherwise. It was first introduced by a man of the alleged name of John Grit, as a country school-house attraction. The fame of the operator of the first 'voice box' had preceded him in his tour across the country, apparently without any advertising 'advance;' but it was mixed with some rather queer ways, said to be observed by this same Grit. It was rumored that he would eat at no man's table, alleging as an excuse that he required twice as much food as an ordinary man; and

that he was ashamed to exhibit his gluttony. So he requested his meals put into a pail or basket, and he would eat them in some barn or outhouse where he kept his machine. Nevertheless, folks, too impatient to await his arrival, went miles to meet his performance; and people were not too curious to inquire into his table etiquette, so long as he paid promptly for what he wanted. But for my part, I laid low, and did not allow the tempest of excitement, speculation and wonder attending the talking machine's tour to oust me from my lair, until he camped down for a one night's siege in our home school-house. Then I went."

But just here the narrator made a brief pause, to attend to a slight but important duty—lighting his pipe. Smoking seemed to furnish as great a stimulus to him while tracing the fancies of his brain as did the rosetta stone in deciphering the hieroglyphics. And so, having brought his excavated corn cob to full blast, and having allowed the stem to slide into its exact labial niche, he placed his fingers over the top of the bowl, as if to filter the air as it passed through, and continued:

"When I arrived, I found the seats already all taken, and standing room stock rapidly going up. Upon the slight pedagogic dais rested the talking machine, and near it sat the operator. The machine consisted of a box, about four feet wide and broad, by about eighteen inches deep, surmounted by a funnel-shaped arrangement at one end, apparently the orifice through which the 'compressed man' was to find utterance. But what struck me in the ap-

pearance of the 'new voice' was the lack of any carving, or firm's signature, to be seen on its sides. Indeed, its extreme plainness was only equaled by its entire lack of ornamentation. But perhaps at that date manufacturers had not yet learned, or neded to elaborate their phonographs, to make them sell; their wonderful performance was sufficient. Promptly at eight of the clock, Mr. Grit arose and addressed the packed audience as follows:

" 'Ladies and gentlemen, I have tonight the pleasure of introducing to you for the first time the performance of what is the greatest invention human genius has evolved up to the present time—the phonograph; first invented and constructed by Thomas A. Edison. This instrument faithfully records and reproduces any sound that can be made, from love's softest whisper to Jove's harshest thunder. Let it but once become engraved on the recording cylinder, and there it is forever. By its means the tones of the great orators, and the notes of noted musicians, may be preserved as long as time shall last. If the present age should be flooded by another deluge of oblivion, and another period of enlightenment should succeed, and the scientific investigators should delve into the relics of the past, as those of this age are now doing, and should come upon a phonograph, and master the secret of its manipulation, with what a revelation would the astounded searchers be greeted!'

" 'In preparing my records, however, I think I suited your taste exactly. I secured them all myself, and they are not selections from operas, orchestras,

bands, famous musicians, etc., hifalutin stuff which none of you would understand or appreciate. I made all my records myself; and they are chiefly all of sounds you all have heard; which will enable you both to appreciate them the more, and to judge the better of the mimicry. I shall, however, with your permission, begin the entertainment with a record of the song, "Star-Spangled Banner," as sung by myself. Now, listen and doubt your ears. Automaton, speak!'

"And accordingly, seemingly from the funnel on the box, thin, quavering strains of the glorious old hymn began to float out over the heads of the audience; the silence and painful attention of which, notwithstanding its packed condition, was such that one might almost have heard the tread of a fly. It would be impossible to describe, or even name, all the different expressions depicted on the faces in the crowd at this result. Some wore looks of triumph, and these were those who had attended some previous exhibition of Mr. Grit's, and had argued in vain with friends as to what he could do. There were some very old people in the house, who had been living for many years entirely in a little world of their own, and who believed they knew everything; and who had only come out that night to put to flight the idea that any man, by simply turning a crank (as Grit did) could 'make a box talk'; and their faces of humiliation and defeat were painful to see. Some assured themselves that it was merely ventriloquism, although not the slightest flicker could be detected in Grit's face or neck. Some were

amused almost to the point of bursting into laughter. Even babies craned their necks to see whence came the cadaverous sounds. And one old lady knelt down on the floor, not without difficulty, and began to pray, saying it was a 'devil,' which caused some disturbance, until she could be prevailed on to return home. But through it all good order was maintained, and at last the mysterious song came to an end: Grit then said:

" 'I will now entertain you with a piece called the "Roasting Ear Boy." It being a real record of the sayings, doings and incidents of a boy who was sent by his mother for these articles.'

"Then Mr. Grit raised the lid of the box and fumbled with the machine for awhile; after which he began to turn the crank again. For a jiffy there was no sound, and then, seemingly on the very margin of audibility, we began to hear someone faintly whistling. The sound seemed to approach about as rapidly as one would walk; and soon the whistler seemed to knock a rail off the fence in climbing over the same. Presently, we began to hear the rustling corn-blades; and then, I know not how, but suddenly the entire panorama of summer was spread out before us—clear skies, green leaves, dusty roads, cornfields in 'silk' and tassel—everything. As the Roasting Ear Boy proceeded in his errand, still whistling, we could hear him tearing back the husks at the ends of the ears, to ascertain the degree of their maturity, not trusting the condition of the 'silk,' which I have always found to be a sure index in this matter. As he continued his search for 'ripe ears,' he disturbed

a mother quail with her brood. You could actually see the little brown-striped things, as they ran for shelter under the grass; you could see the wary mother fluttering along on the ground in apparent distress, in front of the boy, while ever and anon, seemingly from all sides at once, rose her anxious cries.

"Soon after the noise of the scampering quails had subsided, the running of some small animal was heard, which somehow we knew to be a rabbit. The boy whistled to the fleeing bunny, to stop it; for some people say if you will whistle in a certain way, when you 'jump' a rabbit, it will cause it to stop sooner, believing the whistle to come from another of its own kind. And although I have been acquainted with the rabbits all my life, and never yet heard one of them make the slightest sound, except squealing when caught, there seems to be something in the theory. Anyhow, this particular rabbit seemed to stop; and snap! we heard the boy break one of his roasting ears in two, for a missile to throw at it. Whiz! it struck the soft earth with a thud; whereupon the rabbit ran again. But the boy followed it up cautiously, and continued to throw at it. Soon returning, however, he resumed his basket; and we heard his whistling die away in the distance, whence he came.

"By this time the audience was sufficiently themselves to applaud any clever hit, and the Roasting Ear Boy was soundly cheered; although a view of the real thing would not likely have affected them much. But to have it through a talking machine

was different. And I have noticed the same characteristic in watching representations by moving pictures—people going half wild over scenes when thus portrayed, upon which, in real life, they would not bestow a second glance.

"After the Roasting Ear Boy, Mr. Grit announced The Fishing Party. It began with perfect silence, into which footsteps were soon heard breaking. And then somehow, as before, we fancied the placid pool; we almost felt the cool shade cast by the dark, dense foliage of trees along a water-course, and heard birds singing in the branches. The assembled fishermen began to converse in low tones, lest the noise should drive the fish away; and it appeared that they were all children. You could hear the very rasping of their rods as they rigged up their tackle; and hear them spit on their bait, for luck, preparatory to casting. But there was one among them too young to understand the object of the silence, and his continued chattering would draw an occasional 'hush!' from the other boys. Now and then, you could hear someone land a fish, but more often only the 'swish' of the line as he jerked in vain.

"But the juvenile novice was forever making trouble, and at last, seizing a favorable opportunity, when no one was watching him, he fell with a splash into the water. Then there was a hurry and fright and excitement among the fishers; but everyone seemed afraid to leap into the water after the little fellow, who could be heard making feeble efforts to keep his head above the surface. But this condi-

tion could not last long, for there was a loud 'bow! wow!' on the bank, from some large dog, and the next moment he struck the water with a great splash. Then there was a space of breathless excitement, broken only by the sounds of the dog in the water; but he soon brought the unfortunate boy out, and we even heard him shake himself after his noble deed. The members of the fishing expedition then retreated.

"It would indeed be difficult to describe the emotions caused in the audience by this well-rendered scene. Men could scarcely restrain themselves; children began to cry, and women streamed. Mr. Grit siezed the interim between this scene and the one following to assure his audience that they were only representations, and that no one would be hurt.

"The next record rendered was that of a "rap-jacket" contest between two boys. Rap-jacket, should any of you happen not to know, was a game much indulged in at that time by the studious youth of the land. It consisted of two boys, each with a long keen switch, catching hold of hands and whipping each other until one of them had enough. And its object was to render the candidates indifferent to the master's floggings; and whether it really rendered the skin callous, or only tended to dissipate the dread and fright of pedagogic chastisement—its main element—I know not, but at any rate I have indulged in it until the teacher's frequent belaborings were of no more avail than if they had been laid on with rods of pith. Of course Mr. Grit's rendition

of it was chiefly for the sake of humor, and it filled the purpose admirably; men laughed then "who never laughed before," and who probably never laughed again.

"The next effort of the 'wooden man' was to reproduce a thunder storm, and in this it did not fail. People actually looked out of the windows and doors, to see if a veritable storm were not raging, and were surprised to find the sky perfectly cloudless. The very house seemed to rock. Upon the decks of the driving clouds stood a thousand embattled Jupiters, hurling thunder-bolts at each other, as if to wreck the world. And when the torrents of imaginary rain began to fall—we were enduring a long drought then—the farmers could scarcely help chuckling at the thought of how it would benefit the parched crops.

"In addition to the above described scenes, there were a number of minor ones, such as the songs of birds, the sounds of a number of kinds of animals, a charivari, a family sow giving suck to her farrow, etc., which I shall omit giving in detail, but hurry on to the two grand concluding efforts; the effect of one of them, however, was such that I cannot choose but relate it. Mr. Grit called it the "Twilight Canter of Major Slack,' and it was perhaps his most humorous hit. We were made bystanders beside a road, while up and down before us galloped the poverty-pompous Major. We could even hear the rasping of his saddle, and the protestations of the good steed's audible abdomen.

"What I considered the best effort of Mr. Grit

on that memorable night was the record of a chase after a fox by hounds. The dogs were represented as beginning the chase on a 'cold trail,' and therefore the first part was slow and unexciting; and once the horns sounded to recall the hounds. But suddenly they burst out with energy, speed and vigor. The pack consisted of five dogs, and what surprised me was the fidelity with which their individual 'tongues' were sustained throughout. On, on, now east, now west, now north, now south, swept the moving orchestra. Now one dog 'had the fox,' now, another. On, on, now faintly audible, now seemingly right at us; now threading valleys filled with hoary mist, now climbing high hills, swept the wildest, the sweetest, the most unconventional, music ever heard on earth. And still the elastic mantle of melody, woven of short yelps and barks, and of bursts of "lengthened sweetness long drawn out,' stretched about over the country. I could not enjoy it properly, for thinking that it must come to an end sometime. And so it did. Reynard, selecting from his seemingly endless repertoire one of his tricks for throwing off his pursuers, began to try it on them; and as usual, it succeeded. In spite of all the dogs could do, the scent became colder and colder, and hence the music more and more broken, until one by one they relinquished it, and returned to the hunters. And we could hear the very whimperings of the hounds as they came, knowing they had done well; and the receding hoof-beats of the huntsmen's horses as they galloped away."

"Of course the male element of the crowd was

mostly composed of men who considered it a part of their religion to hate a hound, and utterly to ignore anyone who had anything to do with one, but nevertheless, there was not a person present, man, woman or child, who did not listen with all his soul to the music of the chase, and put a hand behind an ear to assist the hearing during the fainter parts.

"But perhaps the greatest triumph of Mr. Grit's instrument that night was the 'Mocking Bird's Song.' The first notes had no sooner begun to thrill through the house, than somehow we felt it to be the genial springtime, and we could see the musical plagiarist, seated on the topmost twig of an apple tree in full bloom, above which from time to time it lifted itself a few feet in its 'restless ecstacy,' displaying its beautiful colors in the warm sunshine. The song was nothing similar to the monotonous, artificial jargon usually palmed off by professional bird mockers, on the stage—which would seem to make the bird an original songster—but it was the mocking bird's song just as the bird gives it. It was not *set* to music, for it was the very soul of music itself. It was most ingeniously and harmoniously woven of the songs of birds familiar to everyone present; even the harsh cries of the crow and jay finding room in its joyous flow, without impairing the melody. It lasted fully five minutes, and during the entire time I did not catch a single repetition, though there may have been some of the notes of birds least familiar to me; and at its close a dead silence prevailed, as is said once to have followed a recitation by Burns of his poem 'Lord Gregory.'

"When the last notes of the Mocking Bird's Song had died away, Mr. Grit quit turning the crank, and announced that the entertainment was at an end, thanking 'one and all for their kind patronage and good order,' and bidding them, if they cared to hear a repetition of the same records, to meet him at the school-house of an adjoining district on the following night. The crowd, highly pleased with the disposal of its time and money, was preparing to depart, when a certain Mr. Calloway appeared on the platform beside Mr. Grit, and spoke like this:

" 'Ladies and gentlemen, wait a minute! Listen! When I first heard of this thing, I said it was a "fake." I say so still. The idea of making wood and iron imitate the human voice, when all attempts to train animals to do so have failed, is unreasonable, impossible, and I am here tonight either to prove it, or to make myself ridiculous in the attempt. I do not intend to hurt any man, or harm any man's property, but I *must* see what lies beneath that box lid, which Mr. Grit has been so cautious about raising, and always from the back side; and if there is only "machinery" underneath it, I'll acknowledge I'm beaten.'

"Saying which, he made a step towards the box. Mr. Grit hesitatingly advanced, as if to interfere. As well have tried to blow out the sun! Mr. Calloway gave him a look to make a statue quail, raised the lid of the mysterious box, and a moment later drew thence, a laughing, squirming boy!

"And this was the success and failure of the first phonograph in White County. This explained

the mystery of Mr. Grit's ravenous appetite. As for the boy, he might have been the nucleus of Scott's Flibertgibbet, and all other 'demon children.' His head was about as large as that of a partridge; his freckled skin was drawn as tightly over his face as the skin of a banjo, and he seemed to consider the present denouement as the funniest thing that could possibly have happened. He was one of those natural mimics, for whose vocal powers no sounds seem difficult. Indeed, people afterward called him the 'inimitable mimic' As for Mr. Calloway, he seemed no more surprised at what he had exposed than he would have seemed at finding an ear of corn under the husk, or a kernel in a hazelnut-shell; it was perhaps well for him that he died before the 'talking machine' and other 'profane inventions' had to be acknowledged in his county.

"Well, I have seen men shrink into dwarfish proportions on more occasions than one, but Mr. Grit, at this turn of affairs, distanced them all. The crowd jeered and ridiculed him some, but the cleverness of his scheme, and the enjoyment it had just afforded them, was not entirely overlooked. Mr. Calloway enjoyed his triumph in silence for a moment, and then turning to the *human,* or rather *in*human hoax, he inquired:

" 'And, young man, what do you think about it?'

"Whereupon the hobgoblin, to whose risibles the ludicrousness of the situation was still making violent appeals, and who seemed to have

brought the art of spitting through his teeth to great perfection, sent three or four fine streams of saliva spinning against that gentleman's boots. Adrastia!"

A SUNSET IDYL.

I lay one evening on a grassy mound,
E'en as the sun, "with richest alchemy,"
(He had just sunk to his cloud-curtained couch)
Turned all the Occident to ruddy gold.
And yet not *all;* along the horizon
Masses of cloud were piled, careless, it seemed,
And yet with order; and in their many folds
Near every tint appeared. Where sank the sun
The cloud-mountains were divided, and made,
As 'twere, a canyon through which he passed.
And on each side stood tall, long-snouted clouds,
Like ship-crushing Symplegades, opposed.
And between the rifts, up the rugged sides,
Black were the cloud-caverns; and higher up
A greenish tint appeared, and in between
Near every hue was seen; while at the top,
Level and smooth, the crimson summit spread.
Well-nigh entranced, I viewed the rich-hued scene,
And as I gazed, I mused: "What man, alas!
That ever hath, or ever will have life,
With all the ingredients the world affords,

Laboring through life, could ever hope
Such a scene to paint, as the Almighty,
All at once, without a visible stroke,
With merely clouds and sunshine here hath made!"
But who for long could view so grand a scene,
And not form actors for so fine a stage?
I could not; though I own, at first, my mind
Was overcome; and I could nothing *thing*.
And nothing *feel* but awe and admiration.
But bye and bye it shook the stupor off,
And soon with moving actors filled the stage.
From every source the apparitions came,
Of every kind; sometimes from memory,
Sometimes from fancy's cunning. Thus, one time,
Upon the crimson cloud-stage, I would see
Poor, gaunt, withered Hepzibah leading
The blasted Clifford; or, the wild Holgrave
Making love to sweet, fresh Phoebe e'en in death's
cold presence.
Or let me but think: "Poet in the clouds,"
And straightway on the cloud's edge would appear
Some stately poet, in fine frenzy wandering;
A holly-wreath, inhaloed, round his head;
His brow alive with thought; his sweet white hands
In adoration clasped; and so he passed,
Leaving upon the sunset-painted scene
Tints e'en lovelier than those held before.
Another time, the thought passed through my
mind,
That possibly the mound on which I lay,
In prehistoric ages might have been
Erected by mound-builders, mystic race.

And quickly on the cloud-stage there appeared
A strangely-habited throng, vague of mien,
Scooping with rudest tools the crimson cloud;
And at the view, thus to myself I mused;
"And thus it is, wherever man hath been,
In any part of earth, no matter where,
Barbarous or civilized, 'tis still his wont,
Whether he wrought in wood, in iron, or earth,
To raise toward heaven some triumphal pile—
True symbol of his sky-aspiring soul."
Let me but think of "Midsummer Night's Dream,"
And straightway throngs would flock from Fairy-land:
"Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed,"
Sweet Titania, Puck and Oberon;
Trooping after their great master, Shakespeare.
Another time, by what inspired I know not,
The cloud-stage served as place of exercise
For the lost souls below; and forth they came;
With trembling caution slow they walked along,
Like those unused to freedom; and with their hands
Did shade their eyes, e'en from the fading light,
Like men inured to darkness—a ghastly crew!
Upon their backs grew dwarfish, useless wings,
Sad rudiments of poor, unfinished souls;
And so they stalked and scowled. But look above!
The heavens open, a spirit of light
Comes down. Among the fearful host he goes,
And tries to lead them in the better way.
But all in vain, for 'tis at last too late;
Light-blasted, backward from his face they slink,

And sink in the abyss behind the cloud.
Scarcely were the lost souls off the stage,
Before a very different troop arrived:
Two armed hosts against each other moved,
And with a mountain-shaking shock they met;
I almost heard the sound! Dire was the fight.
A thousand Deaths a thousand sickles plied;
Over the red clouds ran the redder blood,
And streamed and trickled down their sloping sides.
E'en Mars was sated. But enough of this,
For scenes of carnage never pleased my eye,
When seen depicted on the printed page,
Or pictured canvas, or from fancy's mould;
I loathe alike all forms and shows of it;
I was not born to praise the man of blood.
Oh! when will ever come the poet of peace!
Confusion's sons have surely been enow,
Who stuffed their phrases with the sounds of war,
And with the blood of battles painted scenes;
And set this show before man's barbarous taste;
But when will God inspire some friend of peace,
With soul inflamed against all-hellish war,
To string again to mortal ears the lyre,
All dedicate to justice, peace and truth;
For this, and this alone, is poetry;
And bring it to a more celestial strain
Than ever any war-pitched song hath reached!
Thus on the cloud-stage scene succeeded scene,
Even as fancy's unreined wand'ring chose;
For as it would, I let it run, nor made
An effort to direct its course; only
At times I made the test to see how long

Its faint-glowing radiance could be made
To illumine the selfsame view; or, again,
How soon one image could be made to fade,
And others come. And of this latter kind
A group in quick succession passed my eye;
And thus they came ,a moment paused, and passed:
Immortal Sappho on Leucadia,
Old Diogenes sitting in his tub,
The venturous spendthrift 'fore the caskets musing,
The mad Othello putting out the light.
The blushing Cressid 'mong the merry Greeks,
The ruined Margaret to the Mater praying,
Pygmalion clinging round his statue's base,
Pale Narcissus gazing in the pool,
Hercules holding Antaeus in air,
The wild Lycurgus murdering his son,
The Lycian clowns dancing in the pool,
Achilles chasing Hector round the walls,
Don Quixote charging at the wind-mills,
And so I lay, and thus with fancy played;
But what a wag is fancy when unreined!
Hence, the last scene to which she treated me,
As I recall, was this: Along the cloud
A pair of puffing oxen hove in sight,
Drawing a heavy wain. With snow-white bags
The wain was heaped; and 'mong the snowy bags,
A negro boy, the driver, lay curled up,
Fast asleep.
And as they passed, with weary step and slow,
Down to mid-leg the lab'ring oxen sank
In the fleecy cloud. But at this last scene
I looked as one that sees and yet sees not;

A drowsy mist began to clog my eyes;
The vision of the sleeping negro made
Me also sleepy; and now besides,
Well-nigh were gone the twilight's splendid hues;
Almost, the west was like the east. And now
Bright Hesperus, the star that Homer loved,
Had kindled in the sky her evening fire.
The first sweet breeze of night did fan my brow;
Like incense, from the warm earth floated up
A feeling as of rest and thankfulness;
It wrapped my senses round, and so I slept.
How long I slept I cannot surely know;
But this I do know, at least, I think I *know,*
E'en as I slept I heard a soft, faint voice;
Though whence it came I scarcely could devine.
But clear, though faint, its pity-pleading tones
Did pierce the drowsy mantle of my sleep,
Stirred the enfolded sense, and thus it said:
"Oh ye, whoe'er ye be, that rule the clouds,
I pray ye now, unmask sweet heaven's face,
And let my little star shine forth again;
For it alone doth bear me company,
And naught on earth doth seem to care for me.
The plants around seem wild, and fierce and strange,
And know not me; or, if they know, they hate.
Hence, soon as e'er the darkness 'gins to fall,
My fear begins; nor ceases till I can
Look up and see my friendly guardian's face,
One tiny star among the millions there.
So all night long I gaze upon its beams,
And hope and strength I seem to get therefrom.
But now, alas! my tiny friend is hid!

And fear comes o'er me! Oh, dull clouds, give
way,
And let my bright friend still my troubled time."

I heard no more; the tiny voice ceased.
Soon after I awoke, and looked around;
Cloudless were the heavens, and in mid-sky
Half-grown Diana shown; and I recalled
That when I fell asleep the azure dome
Had been o'er veiled with flakes of thinnest gauze,
Not dense enough to be called clouds, but just
Thick enough to intercept the star-beams.
But now, like veils from off a statue,
Down the smooth sides of heaven they had slid;
And sunk beneath the horizon; and so,
Fleckless, unveiled, the sparkling heavens shown.
Amazed at this, so sorting with my dream,
If dream it were, I 'gan to search around.
(For from the earth the prayer had seemed to come)
And soon, among the dewy plants and shrubs,
I found a tiny violet; all alone
It grew; and to its *tame* and gentle kind
No doubt the wild and hardy shrubs around
Seemed strange and fierce; and so it looked above,
And sought its friends among the twinkling stars;
Hence, when the clouds shut out its star-friend's
face,

It 'gan to fear, and prayed they be removed.
At least so I conclude, though others may
Explain it as they choose; but this I know,
That, whe'er the violet really prayed or no,
With careful hands I dug her from her place,

Among the wild, unsympathizing crew;
And, with no mementos of the place,
Save the earth on her roots, I bore her home,
And set the gentle plant among her kind.

THE KNIGHT OF THE BLACK GARTER.

I scarcely know whether I am yet able to write or not, but I shall try. The petals of the white rose, prepared by my wife and daughter, are dry and ready, and the poke-berry juice is waiting, and evaporating; and there is no reason why the writing of the story of my capture by the Young God should be longer delayed, unless it should be the insufficient stage of my convalescence.

I will begin, then, where the story begins, though the first part of it is very well known, in the garden of sweet-smelling blossoms. The field of flowers belonged, of course, to one of the Gods, and by the merest chance I happened to stray near it one day. At first, having only seen the plants and flowers that grow wild in the fields and woods, I was overcome by the sight and smell of so many different kinds of beautiful flowers. For awhile I was afraid to enter, it being the first of the kind I had ever seen; but soon, seeing all kinds of bugs, bees and butterflies already in it, including not a

few of my own kind, I flew boldly over the high, pointed pales that inclosed this pleasure ground of the Gods. I had never heard or even dreamed of anything half so lovely, and at first I could do little more than fly from bloom to bloom, and admire the delicacy of their rich beauty and the dainty fragrance that came from them. But there were so many different kinds that one might easily have spent a summer's day in this task, and then not have completed it. I noticed, however, that no other guest, or, perhaps, intruder, appeared to be at all impressed by the magnificence of the display, but the sole business of each and every one of them seemed to be to get as much nectar as possible out of the tinted chalices.

At first I was shocked at this evidence of lack of taste in my countrymen; it seemed to me a crime to turn such a paradise into a mere field of labor for a multitude of honey gatherers. I paused to observe the army of dead-souled workers; not one could I see that I knew. My! but I must have flown a long distance from home that morning; or perhaps all the others had a right to be there, and I alone was the intruder. Perchance they were tamed insects, taught to gather honey for the God who owned the blooms; and I, as soon as discovered, would be driven out. I essayed to speak to two or three of my own kind, but they seemed to be too busy to listen or answer; or perhaps they considered me a drone, and therefore not worthy of their notice. This confirmed me in my opinion that they were domesticated honey gatherers, although I had never

heard of this being done with anything but a certain kind of bee; while here there were almost as many of a number of kinds of bugs, including my own, as there were of bees. I knew not what to think, and so, to preclude as far as possible the chances of being driven out of so enchanting a place, in case the workers *were* domesticated, and the owner should arrive, I determined to fall to myself, and though my kind were never reckoned excellent at honey gathering, do the best I could. With this idea in mind, with trembling feet, almost as I were profaning the shrine of a virgin Goddess, I alighted on one of the resplendent blooms.

I had barely had time to fold my wings away under their hard, bony cases, and to note that the crimson chalice of the blossom on which I stood, notwithstanding the army of busy laborers all about it, seemed to be well stored with nectar; when, happening to look up, I saw, standing not three feet from me, a small young God. In my fright and amazement, I came near falling off my flower. I looked directly at the young God, however, and life cannot last long enough to erase from my memory the exact picture of him as he stood there. Oh, but he was beautiful! He could not have been more than three years old, as the Gods compute time. His bright eyes were blue as the bells of the morning glory, and his yellow curls, filled with the early sunshine, gleamed like webs of golden wire. Even as I looked at the apparition, still wondering in my mind whether it were real or only fancied, with outstretched arms it began to run towards me. I could

not move. I was fascinated, as the moths say in explanation of their mysterious, fatal conduct upon seeing a flame. Nearer and nearer he came. Surely he would not hurt me; by no possibility could cruelty be connected with so much beauty. He reached out his little, dimpled hand for me. Still I did not move, and so his warm, moist palm closed over me.

But I was no sooner in his hand than I began to change the opinion of a lifetime concerning the nature and attributes of the Gods, or at least of a Little God. My! how he squeezed me. If I had been anything like the worm, with a soft skin, he would have killed me. As it was, he made every joint and rivet in my armor creak, though I did not feel much pain. I now began to try to free myself of the close, dark cell, but the more vigorously I struggled, the more tightly did it close around me. I expected at least to have two or three legs broken, but luckily I did not. At last, seeing that resistance only made matters worse, I lay quite still.

From the sensations I received, I judged the Young God to be moving about all the time, and so indeed he was. After what seemed to me an age, he opened his hand, not, however, so that I could escape, which I would now gladly have done, and said: "Oh, Mama! here's a june bug I found out in the garden. I want you to tie him for me with a thread by the leg so I can make him 'june.'"

The Mother Goddess looked up from the sewing on which she was engaged, and said, "all right, Darling."

Oh! how my hopes sank as I heard her pro-

nounce those three words. I, who at the hands of the Mother had expected to get my liberty, and hear the boy rated for his cruelty, to be tied with a thread by the leg! But no such thoughts as these were passing in the mind of the Mother Goddess as she said: "Come here, Love; you hold him and I'll tie him," breaking a piece of thread off a spool as she spoke. With a dexterity that showed him to be no novice at the act, the boy held my body between the dimpled fingers and thumb of one hand, while with the other he straightened out one of my legs, while the mother tied the black thread tightly around it, close up to my body. My, how it hurt! It was the first time any of my legs were ever straight—you see, they were not made straight.

Well, my present opinion of the goodness of the Gods is somewhat harsher than it once was, but even now I do not believe that, could the mother have foreseen all the agony and suffering her act was to produce, even her desire to please her Son could have caused her to knot the thread.

As soon as the Boy saw me securely fastened, he took the other end of the thread in his hand, and went out of the house and stood beneath a large tree that was in the yard. And now behold me, a respectable bug, being jerked about at the end of a thread by a three year's Boy, for no possible crime that I know, except that he happened to be born a God, and I a bug. At first I strived to climb the thread, but could not do so. When the Little God told his Mother he wanted me tied so he could hear me "june," I did not understand what he meant. But

I soon came to know by his constant jerking as often as I was still, that he wanted me to be flying all the time, that he might hear the sound of my wings, I suppose.

And fly I did. I flattered myself that after I had flown for a time I would get my liberty; so I did my best. But it is remarkable how soon one tires of flying under such conditions. It is the pulling one does against the string that causes it, I suppose. I tried to support myself in the air without pulling against the string, but in vain, so strong is the love of liberty, and even the most frail hopes of regaining it, when once lost. With an occasional short rest, it is nothing difficult for me to fly all day, but I had not pulled against that string for half an hour until my wings uterly refused to beat, and I could do nothing but hang at the end of the string. But his Godship wanted more of it. He jerked me so violently that twenty times I thought he would pull my leg out. But it did no good, for I could fly no more.

Well, I had a terrible time, not knowing what was to come next. But at last my captor became weary. He lay down in the shade and fell asleep. Gently I pulled at the thread, to see if it would uncoil from around his dimpled fingers, and it did! Liberty! In an instant my ebbing vigor returned fourfold. With the black thread trailing after me, I flew through the soft, white sky. How dreary, uninviting a place the field of flowers seemed as I passed over it! The world never looked half so beautiful before.

Without turning aside once, or even dropping low enough for the thread to catch on anything, I flew straight home, and told my wife all about what had happened, and if the string had not been still tied to my leg as proof of it, I might well have been laughed at for my pains; not that my wife is unusually incredulous, nor that I bear a reputation for mendacity, but because the case of anyone ever escaping after having once fallen into the hands of the Gods is so seldom that anyone who relates such a story, unless he has indisputable evidence with which to fortify it, is universally dubbed a liar, and his word is considered worthless ever after. And I, had I escaped without the thread, even though I had lost the leg to which it was tied, would not have dared to relate my adventure. So much for the opinion held by the insects of the mercy and forbearance of the Gods, and it is justified, for whenever any of our kinsmen fall into their hands, what becomes of them we know not, but we see them no more. And yet I, knowing this full well when I was presented by the Boy to his Mother, had the absurdity to expect liberty at her command!

But I must go on with my story. Well, the news had no sooner gone out, and I was not slow to assist in spreading it, though I have since repented, that I had actually escaped uninjured from the hands of the Gods, than I became at once the most famous person the annals of Bugland have known for many a day. I was thronged to from far and near. Across many fields came all kinds of my countrymen to see the fortunate bug that had escaped from the

Gods, and also the wonderful bit of their material that I had brought away with me. Even the busy ants and bees left their toil, and came many wing-flights to see the insect that had been clasped in the hand of the young God, and yet escaped uninjured. I found myself obliged to be in company almost all the time, day and night, giving audiences, and relating my marvelous adventure, and I was compelled to keep an almost innumerable host of translators, for the benefit of all the other kinds of insects, as I only speak my own language myself.

As I always carried my thread with me in a coil around one of my legs—indeed, I could not do otherwise, for no one could untie the knot, and besides I did not want it untied—I soon came to be known as the Knight of the Black Garter, and right proud I was of the title. Many and magnificent were the functions planned and carried out in my honor. Wherever I came, I was received almost like one of the Gods, except that no fear went with me. In the entire annals of Bugland there was no account of anything that ever equaled my triumph, and instead of decreasing, it seemed to grow greater constantly and each succeeding day brought parties of tourists from yet greater distances.

For awhile it suited me admirably, but after a time it began to grow burdensome, and I longed for rest and peace and quiet again. But there seemed to be no dawning hope of any such prospect in the future. Of course, at first I had been very affable to all who came to see me, accepted all their

invitations to functions in my honor, and made myself generally agreeable, and now I saw no way out of it, except by becoming unsocial and repulsive, and this I hated to do after the start I had made; nevertheless, I heartily wished myself out of it, by some means or other. Oh, if people could only understand, and use some judgment in such matters, but they only consult their own convenience and curiosity. But at last, a few hours of solitude at least became absolutely indispensable. So one day I determined to steal away for awhile, without saying anything to anyone about it. And so, with the coil of my spoils upon my leg, and going by the most abscure routes, I flew about for hours in the perfect luxury of being alone, and with nothing to break the tenure of my complete happiness, except an occasional pang when I thought of the disappointment they would have to endure who called to see me that afternoon.

At last, in my ecstatic, aimless wandering, I came upon what seemed to be an old deserted field. There were no flowers or blooms in it, only weeds and briars and bushes; the very place, I thought, where I would be least likely to meet any kind of bug. This inviting place, therefore, I, being slightly weary with my long flight, decided to convert for a while into my paradise of seclusion. Gladly I flew inside, and as what I deemed the safest retreat, alighted on one of the dead shrubs. Here I sat for some time, crouching low on my bough to elude observation as far as possible should any one of my kind come wandering near my retreat, in the per-

fect ecstacy of being alone; allowing, in my abandon, the black thread, the voucher of my fame, to come uncoiled from my leg, and to dangle toward the ground.

But at last my delicious reverie came to an end, and I realized that I must return home, make my apologies and be the hero of the day once more. With this end in view, I uncased my gauze-like wings, and started to fly, but I had only gone a foot or two when I felt myself abruptly checked. Ah! in my impetuosity to rush once more into the arms of fame, I had forgotten the very thing that bestowed it. I had failed to rewind my uncoiled thread. This I now attempted to do, but found it impossible, for the thread had in some manner become wound around one of the lower branches of the bush and I could not move it.

The harder I pulled on it, the tighter it became, and I began to become alarmed. I descended to the limb around which the thread was twisted, and attempted, by crawling around the bough, to unwind it. But alas! the more I toiled, the more it became entangled. I now tried to untie it from around my leg, and be free of it at any cost, but I found that I could not do so.

I now began to believe the thread to be a sentient thing, or at least capable of understanding and executing the orders of the Gods. I believed that the Mother Goddess had commanded it, if ever I should escape from her Son, to wreak my ruin, and it was now only following her lethal mandates; and these thoughts gave such a shock to my already

dying hopes that I could scarcely make another effort to be free. Oh, how I cursed and loathed the black thing now, which I formerly only worshipped and fondled, loving it above everything else on earth. How I loathed the pageants and hollow flatteries, once so dear to me, that had filled my time for the last few days, and longed only for life and liberty once more. But all in vain! Neither vows of repentance, words of entreaty, nor my physical exertions served to free me of the relentless thread. And so, with nothing in my reach more of the nature of sustenance than the dead bark of the bough on which I rested, I settled down to my long fast.

During the first part of my long continuance in this desolate place I tried to console myself with the thought that some one would come in sight, whose attention I could attract, like the shipwrecked God, as I have heard, sitting under his palm-tree gazing with unwearied eyes for ever and ever on the hopeless deep; but the shipwrecked God would, I hope, have a better chance for procuring food and drink than I had, for I found the spot I had chosen as so admirable for solitude to be the most unfortunate place on earth in case of accident. And yet I saw, or was it only fancy, bodies flying through the air continually; but not one of them, if they were real, ever came close enough to hear or see me, or if they did hear, to heed. The searching parties, as I have since learned, sent out by my family and friends, came time after time to the edge of the old field, but never thought of examining so unlikely a place.

For a while I tried to free myself by wrenching out my leg, but found it impossible. Then came the pangs of hunger and thirst. My kind is not quickly susceptible to these, but when they do come, they are severe; and mingled with it all was the sickening thought that I was getting only what I had deserved, from some cause or other. At last I *was* too weak to move and so I lay quite still, and all hope of rescue having faded, awaited the end. But how slowly it came! I was dying so gradually that I began to wonder if I should know when I was really dead. And at last the day no longer seemed light and the night no longer dark, but all was a changeless dull glow, and I could scarcely distinguish day and night.

But at last, one day, long after I had given up all hope, and after all sensation had been subdued and deadened, and as I sat in painless stupidity, calmly awaiting the end, I heard, or fancied I heard, sounds, and they seemed to come from another world. With new vigor instilled into me by this reawakening of the long-dead hope of rescue, I turned my blurred eyes towards what I thought to be the direction of the sounds, and tried to make out their cause, but in vain. I could see nothing. The sounds, however, became louder and nearer, and at last I made out their source. But alas! they were Gods. My hopes sank again. Straight on towards me came the Gods. There were three of them, two females and one male, and I had not the slightest doubt that they were coming for me, knowing that the thread would effect my capture. On they came,

laughing and chatting merrily. I observed them as well as I could with my defective sight.

The God was rather below the medium height, had prominent cheek-bones, deep-set eyes, a wrinkled brow and a perpetual scowl on his face, and I heard one of the Goddesses tell the other, aside, that he had Cupid's bow in his legs, whatever that may mean. One of the Goddesses was also rather short. She had white hair, a short, selfish nose, and snappish ways, the temperment of a jacksnapper, as we should say in Bugdom. The other Goddess was tall and stately; her features were regular, though not very fine, and she had black, coarse hair. I noticed that both the Goddesses called the God "Professor," and seemed to be very fond of him, and very much in awe of his opinion. I also noticed that the God rather monopolized the conversation.

He spoke almost incessantly, and even during the short periods when he was not talking, his lips were still moving noiselessly. I at first attributed this to his intense meditation, but when I observed that he seemed to do it more vigorously when one or both of the Goddesses were looking at him, I concluded that it might as likely be affection as not. On came the merry trio, and I was in hopes that they might pass without seeing me; but the bright eyes of the short-nosed Goddess spied me, and she cried out: "Oh! see here what a beautiful specimen of the very thing we are looking for."

The exclamation of course brought all of them around me, and the coarse-haired Goddess exclaim-

ed: "And if it is not tied with a thread to the limb!"

But at this point the "Professor" God could hold his silence no longer. Coming between the Goddesses, and taking me in his hand, he said:

"Ladies, you may now thank your stars that you are fortunate enough to see an actual example of a class of accidents peculiar to the lower animals, of which, although it is common, it is by no means every one's luck to see an actual example. The contingency consists, as you see, of the victim getting his feet tangled up in a loose thread in such a manner that it is impossible for the unfortunate to extricate itself; and as it almost invariably, sooner or later, gets the thread fastened to some immovable object, perishes. But the most peculiar feature of this phenomenon, if you will allow me to call it such, is the inexplicable manner in which the cord often gets looped around the victim's feet;" he said, as he observed that the thread was securely tied to one, and only one, of my legs.

"Yes," he continued suddenly, to keep either of the Goddesses from getting the start of him, "it is often found tied as neatly and tightly as if done by human hands; and if you please, the case we now have under discussion is an example of the most perfect knot it has ever been my good fortune to see in such a case." As he said this, the learned God, having broken the thread loose from the bough, held me up that the interested Goddesses might verify his remarks.

"And so," he continued, holding me on his

palm, and apostrophizing me, while I blushed under the closeness of his ill-bred scrutiny, "you little infinitesimal thing! You thought yourself capable of understanding and examining the affairs of men, the thread of the seamstress; and your presumption proved fatal, just as it does in thousands of cases." Oh, poor benighted professor! A most complete and accurate scholar, and a most profound and precise thinker, you may be; but I cannot choose but know that there was at least one occasion in your life, when a mere bug, had it not lacked the ability to speak the language, in which you were so abundantly blessed, might have corrected you. Why, indeed, did he continue in such blind adherence to his theory? While to any normal capacity it *must* have occurred that such a happening would have been next to impossible. Did the facile-tongued professor never once remember that some God might have tied the thread around my leg? Apparently, he did not, nor did either of the Goddesses; or if they did, they had too much respect for the professor's opinion, to mention it. And now, seeming to think that he had thoroughly inculcated the entanglement theory, the all-knowing professor said to the fair-haired Goddess, "Nevertheless, he is, as you say, a fine specimen, and he is yours; open your case."

And the Goddess thus addressed took from under her left arm a long, narrow box, and raised the lid; and I looked within. And there one of the great mysteries of my life was cleared up. The box had three or four thin strips, perhaps half an inch high, fastened to its bottom, running lengthwise; and

upon these were the dead bodies of many different kinds of bugs; some of them dry, and some but lately killed, with pins driven through them and into the wood beneath. And this, then, is what becomes of all the poor unfortunate bugs that chance to fall into the hands of the Gods; this is their final tomb and resting place. But what, in the name of reason, is the meaning of it all? To what use can they possibly put us? Do they eat us, or what at last becomes of us? Alas! I know not; I only know that I saw my kind and kindred there, and came near going there myself; but beyond this, all is darkness. To suppose a change of cases: Imagine all the Gods, by some accident like that which revealed the fate of my missing countrymen to me, happening suddenly to find all their kind that have ever disappeared, in our possession, in such condition as I found my friends. What would they do!

However, one mirthful thing happened as the fair-haired Goddess opened her sarcophagus. She was evidently in the bug business in earnest, for her bosom was thickly decorated with specimens of entomological jewelry; and perhaps this is what the Gods want with us, as models by which to fashion their metallic images of ourselves. Well, as the young Goddess opened her coffin, she said: "I am awfully glad I found this specimen of the June Bug, or May Beetle, as it is sometimes called; as I have but one, and would like two."

Now, you may be sure that at the mention of "June Bug," I peered yet more closely into the box, to detect and recognize, if possible, my unfortune

fellow-bug. But on the honor of a beetle, there was no June Bug in the box. There were spiders, crickets, grasshoppers, etc., but no June Bug; nor anything that resembled one, except a specimen of tumble-bug, that is colored slightly like ourselves; but I never dreamed of anyone being blind enough to mistake him for one of us. For was there not his dirt-shovel, invincible evidence of his vocation, protruding into plain view? Nevertheless, I can but conclude that the young Goddess had mistaken us, and doubtless even with the sanction of the learned Professor; and the thought was so humiliating that I did not much care if she nailed me on the bier beside him. To have a bug that is hatched, reared, works all its life, and lays its eggs in dung, mistaken for one of us! To have the dull daubbery of a manure-worker's color confounded with our coat of burnished flame!

But just as the bug-epicurean Goddess was going to put me in the box, the black haired Goddess, with the Cleopatran features, breaking into the Professor's endless lingual sluice, said:

"Wait! is that bug dead yet?" I moved slightly and with great difficulty, for the first time since they had found me, as I lay in the shortnosed Goddess' palm, to show that I was not yet dead.

"No," she continued, "it is not dead. Can't you see it move? Well, now, I'll tell you what I think we ought to do with it. We ought to turn it loose." The other two started visibly. "I'll give you my reasons," she continued, after giving them time to recover from the shock.

With the very first word spoken in my defense by the dark browed Goddess, my hopes began to rise. And why? I saw no long, narrow box under her arm; no bronze beetles on her breast.

"I am convinced," she continued, "whatever the Professor may say to the contrary, that this string was tied around this bug's leg by *somebody!*" The Professor and the dumpy Goddess looked thunder-stricken. "Why," she continued, "there is nothing impossible about it." "Did neither of you ever hear of such a thing?" she inquired. They were too amazed to speak, but their vacant faces were a sufficient negative; and so she resumed: "Well, I have; and even, I remember, have had them tied for myself, when I was a child. And I have let them escape with strings on their legs, too, though, I never dreamed of it coming to such as this. You see, they are tied so that children, who love to hear the music of their wings, may keep the buzzing near; and I have not the slightest doubt but that this one was tied for just that purpose, and having escaped with the thread on its leg, it has here become entangled on this barren shrub, and remained until it has almost starved."

The God and other Goddess had now settled down to listening, seeing there was nothing else to do; though still exchanging incredulous glances. And thus my self-appointed champion continued: "Now, this is the point I want to come to. There is among all hunters who have the faintest spark of charity, magnanimity, or anything else but pure selfishness, an unwritten law that the quarry must be

given its life when it has fairly earned it, either by its endurance or by its cleverness. Now, assuming that my explanation of this bug's condition is correct, and I am sure it is, do not both of you think that it has suffered enough at the hands of man, and that the generous thing for us to do would be, not to add it to our collections of specimens, but to become Divine Providence to it by giving it another chance at life? What do you think, Professor?"

Professor 'hummed and hawed,' and managed to say that it was a "splendid specimen," but that of course he supposed liberating it would be the chivalrous thing to do. And now, having two against her, the other Goddess came over quickly. And as a result of it all, not to go too minutely into details, I was laid softly upon the ground; and the Goddess with the dark eyes procured a handful of clover-blossoms from somewhere, and placed them near me. Well, of course, I never saw her before, and never expect to see her again, but may all her life be spent amid banks of neverfading flowers.

But I must hurry on. Well, the thought that I was once more free put such vigor in me that I managed to eat some of the clover. How queer it tasted! And then I slept for a long, long time. When I awoke, I was much stronger, though still unable to fly. But I ate more of the clover, and slept again; and before long I was able to support myself on trembling wings, like a butterfly just out of its cocoon. I then flew home as quickly as possible, though I had some difficulty in finding the way, the appearance of the vegetation had changed so much

since I had seen it. You may well imagine that my coming home, after having been given up for lost, caused no little excitement and joy, though they scarce believed it to be me at first, so bad and poor I looked.

Well, if I were famous when I made my first escape from the Gods, I was certainly doubly so this second time, and I needed no evidence to insure its credence; my emaciated condition was enough. Escape twice unscathed from the hands of the Gods! Such a thing is not recorded anywhere in the history of the bugs; and so many wanted to know all about it, that I could do nothing else but write up an account of it. And this I have now faithfully done, and it is to be translated into all the bug languages, Katydid, Grasshopper, Cricket, etc., and it will, I hope, somewhat lessen the throngs that now press daily to my home, to get the story from my own lips.

I also intend to have a number of copies scattered near some of the homes of the Gods; and if any of them should happen to find them, and be able to translate them, they will, I trust, do something towards rendering the Divinities more worthy of the name they bear. Concerning my own opinion of the nature of the Gods, I scarcely know whether it was made harsher or milder by my two encounters with them; nevertheless, the lesson I am at present trying to impress on my fellow bugs, as the most important one of life, is that they observe every care to keep as far out of the reach of the Gods as possible.

MISTRESS GLUPPINS AND THE ECHO.

Mistress Gluppins was a widow
And all alone dwelt she;
The neighbors said her trenchant tongue
Caused her celibacy;

That once a true and faithful spouse
Loved her most devinely,
Until her ever-warbling tongue
Snipped his thread untimely.

Now, this may all be true or false,
But 'tis of ample proof
That all alone the Widow dwelt,
And no one shared her roof.

So by herself her chores were done,
With no one to assist;
For in her times of oral stress
No mortal could exist.

So on the eve of which I write
The Widow went to milk;
As the sinking sun did paint the sky
With colors soft as silk.

But when she reached the meadow bars,
Her Bos she could not see;
She had not yet forsook the grass
That mantled all the lea.

So far across the country-side
The Widow's treble rolled;
No quav'ring, falt'ring female pipe,
But piercing, clear and bold;

And every living thing that heard
With instant terror shook;
The roosting, leaf-screened birds did quake,
The quiet air was fear-strook.

Bos only was not filled with fear;
She left her verdant mess;
But long she stood ere Gluppin's hand
Her swelling teats did press.

Below the Lorelei stone
Dwelt Echo's family;
His father loved and mother dear,
And thirteen progeny.

Now, it so chanced that on a time
Their eldest son arose,

And to his listening kindred round,
Did thus his mind disclose:

"No longer in this barren spot
Do I intend to stay,
Where one can scarce find food enough,
Though toiling night and day.

To other lands beyond the sea
My course I mean to steer,
To see if I, with honest toil,
Can't meet with better cheer.

Suppose, that in some future time
Our fame should fail to draw,
From every clime, fresh tourists here,
What then would fill the maw?

So I propose to go in time,
Though you may all remain;
There'll be but more for those that stay,
When I my flight have ta'en."

(This is the way the Echo Tribe
Their noisy living gain:
From every sound that they retort
Their vital "toll" is ta'en)

Now, Echo's parents were alarmed
When they heard his intent;
And straight his bold and rash design
They sought to circumvent.

His kind old father told him how,
In lands beyond the sea,
In every place where *he* could dwell,
Echoes were sure to be.

He told him, too, of perils dire,
Met both by sea and land;
He told him that earth's fairest spot
Was still the Fatherland.

But all in vain; Echo was firm;
He'd see if such were true;
He left the Lorelei Stone,
And weeping kindred, too.

So Echo spread his gauzy wings,
And sought the dawn-stained sky;
And for awhile all things went well,
How easy 'twas to fly!

But bye and bye, 'twas not so well;
Ill did poor Echo fare;
And more than once did almost melt,
And "vanish into air."

For Echoes are etherial things,
From purest ether ta'en;
And, if the heat becomes too great,
To that return again.

And so poor Echo found it hard,
As hotter waxed the sun,

To keep his parts from soaring up
To the empyrean.

But bye and bye he reached the sea,
And there the cool fresh breeze
From his disintegration fears
Did render some release.

And so across the raging surge
Echo serenely floats;
Beneath him flapped the great sea-birds,
And sailed the white-winged boats.

At last, once more on solid ground,
Did weary Echo stand;
And felt beneath his airy feet
The pebbles of the strand.

And for some place to build his home
Began to look around:
But oh! his parent's prophesy
But too, too true he found.

For everywhere an Echo *could,*
There one *had* built its home;
And our poor friend believed himself
Forever doomed to roam.

But bye and bye, he found a place,
A snug, vine-curtained home;
Where all day long the dew-drops hung,
And ne'er a sunbeam shone.

No owner could he see around;
Sad Echo walked within;
But oh! he backward stepped in haste
At what there met his ken.

A gossamer-woven mantle
O'erspread the dew-damp grass;
And thereupon a maiden lay,
In drowsy fetters fast.

Now, Echo had seen lovely dames
As ever wrought one's bliss,
His mother and his sisters fair;
But never aught like this.

And so his face o'erspread with shame,
He started to retreat;
When soft! the lady oped her eyes,
And asked him what he wished.

At this our friend's confusion grew;
Fierce blushes 'gan assail;
He cast his eyes upon the ground,
And stammered out his tale.

The gentle lady seemed distressed
At hearing Echo's grief;
She said 'twas surely sad enough,
But she knew no relief.

She said that she for long had lived
Alone in the little grot;

But that she feared besides herself
Another one could not;

That in yon thick, vine-mantled copse,
Too thick for piercing sight,
There sat the sweetest nightingale,
And sang the live-long night;

That she had grown so beautiful
Eating such food long;
But that she feared, at stranger's voice,
The bird would cease its song.

And yet she bade him stray not far,
And surely to return;
For's flaxen locks and honest face
What lady fair could spurn.

So Echo left the leaf-screened grot,
Soon after ceased his quest,
And stretched himself along a hill,
For sore he needed rest.

Now, as along the hill he lay,
A cow-call he did hear;
And Echo gasped for pure delight,
It was so rich and clear.

An instant did he hesitate,
But no one else appears;
Retortive Echo hurls the sounds
Back to the Widow's ears.

Now, Gluppins, when she heard the sounds
Their former path retrace
(She never having heard before
An Echo in that place)

Said: "Well, I'm sure I scarce see how
My good friend, Neighbor Grimme,
Should chance to choose the selfsame time
As I, to call her cow.

"The first call was in unison,
But see who calls the last!"
With this she oped her mouth again,
And sound flowed free and fast.

So, loud and clear her voice rang,
Echo replied again;
And in a trice the race was on,
And who, think you, will win?

Sometimes the Widow called so fast,
No answer could she hear;
But ever, as she paused for breath,
The Echo sounded clear.

Poor Bos upon her mistress gazed,
And still the contest grew;
And, as her wonder higher reached,
Employed her voice too.

And Echo had of course to cast
Back Bos' tones' decline;

The Widow paused, "and does," said she,
"Her very cow mock mine!"

Meanwhile, the sweet, round moon did climb
Above the eastern wood;
And downward gazed with calm delight,
As if she understood.

At this Echo was reinforced;
The Moon's their friend, it seems;
They have been known for weeks to live
All on her wat'ry beams.

Also at last the growing strain
Of milk, as Bos stood 'round,
Did break the seal of her teats' end,
And stream'd upon the ground.

The "shrill-gorged" Widow saw the waste,
And sore it grieved her heart;
But was it a time for one to bear
A mercenary part?

So, all night long the Widow called,
And Echo did reply;
And half the neighborhood sat up,
And mused and wondered why.

But bye and bye the rising sun
Began to light the east,
And Echo hailed the sign with joy,
For it meant his release.

For greatly Echo's night-felt strength
The rosy dawn decreased;
And, with the Widow's falt'ring tones,
He felt himself released.

But woe for Echo's sad collapse!
Battered, bruised and jaded;
He had but strength to drag himself
Back to the Fair Lady.

She nursed him seven days and nights,
And Echo never died;
And there today he may be found,
Most blissfully allied.

And now at last the Widow did
Her long-neglected task;
And when 'twas finished, stood and smiled,
Speechless but triumphant;

When in a flash the right thought came;
Cold shivers o'er her crept,
Her face suffused with burning shame,
She hung her head and wept.

And Gluppin's tongue, by this mishap,
I also later heard,
Straightway as kind and gentle grew
As ever uttered word.

THE EQUITY OF NATURE.

"For of all the wise men that ever lived, not one was ever wise enough to say whether woman be more cruel or more merciful."

I looked up. No one could I see. Who could have spoken? The soft, breeze-like voice continued: "I was once a model for an erect posture, as are all my kind; and now, behold me; two exact right angles in my once perfectly straight body."

Now thoroughly interested, I peered, with hand over eyes, narrowly about me. Surely there was nothing in sight with two right angles in its body, except a poor mangled, broken mullein, that stood in a fence corner hard by; with four or five "suckers" starting out just beneath the point where it was broken, and the part above the break extending out horizontally for a short distance, and then, with another angle, assuming almost the vertical again. But surely the unfortunate mullein had not spoken. However, as I sat trying to solve the puzzle, the voice came again, and this time there could be no mistake about it. It was the mullein speaking.

"If you think you can keep your eyes off that book long enough, I should like to tell you my story, which I am sure is as wonderful as anything you have found in your book, and at least as true," it said, in its soft, velvet tones. I had just been reading of wonders, and so I was enabled to listen to the mullein, as it continued.

"I was once straight and fair as any plant that ever grew toward heaven, and it might interest you to hear how I came by my deformity. It happened this way: One evening, some months ago, just as the last glory of the dying sun was fading from the landscape, a beautiful woman passed slowly along this seldom-traveled lane beside us. She was the loveliest being I have ever seen, and, as she gazed out across the fields, I could see that her eyes were love-laden. Oh! to be a mortal, and have a chance of winning such a divinity! But alas I could but admire her while she remained near me, and sigh for her and hope that she would come again, when she was gone.

"But she was not to go so soon this time. She came up to me, and while I was trembling with excitement, she said: 'This mullein stalk shall be my oracle. I will break it toward his home, and if he loves me it will live again; but if he loves me not, it will die.' And before I hardly knew what she was about, she clasped my rough, stiff body in her soft white hands, one above the other, and actually bent me until my tough fibers were broken and torn apart! Alas! Alas! Came ever such cruelty from so fair a source! All the pains of the barbarous

torture was drowned in my amazement. You see, we have but one year to live, and that is not a long enough time to learn much.

"But what followed? The girl, after having maimed and ruined me for life, looking as if the first thought of cruelty had never come into her heart, passed serenely on. But was this all! No, indeed! For the *equity of nature*, that dwells in every leaf, blade and stem; every branch, bough and trunk; every breeze and every sunbeam; and that lets no offense go unpunished, and no merit unrewarded, took up the matter. I for my part, could have forgiven the girl, but that did no good. And in a few days I was not surprised that the girl's lover, the person dearest to her, was ill; from the conversation of the passerby I gained my intelligence. Well, the conflict with both of us was long and critical; but I knew from the first that it would end the same for both. If I died, so should he; and if I survived, he too, would get well. And at last I began to recover slowly, and so did the poor lover of the fair but ignorantly-cruel maiden.

At last I reached the condition in which you now see me, and was not surprised to be able to gather from the talk of the passerby that the man was able to be about. Well, well, to hurry on with my story, and not to keep you any longer than necessary from your precious book, they are married now, and last evening, just at sunset again, they strolled slowly past me, arm in arm; the man bowed and ruined by the cruel force of the fever, even as I am. And when the woman saw me, she

said to her husband: 'Oh, see! darling, here is the very mullein stalk that I broke to find out if you loved me, and see! it did live; and look! it has five sprouts, the number of children we are to have!' And she blushed. Ah! how much better it is that she does not know!"

The gentle, delicate voice ceased; and I, like one sleeping in a moving vehicle, when it is suddenly stopped, awoke. There stood the broken mullein, and I knew the story of a disease-blasted bridegroom that exactly coincided with what I had heard; but whether the plant really told me the story or whether I dreamed it, will likely never be known.

THE ROYAL POET AND THE MUSES.

The royal poet in his palace sat;
"And I have heard," he suddenly exclaimed,
That now no more the Muses come on earth,
To grace the strains of any modern bard.
Well, now, I have a mind to test this thing,
And two good reasons do impel me to it;
For one, this Muses' fable I would prove,
To see if they were *real* maids or no;
Another: if genuine maids they are,
And from the prosy earth have winged their flight,
Disgusted with the flatness of the age,
Why, then, mine own charms I would like to try,
To see if *it* would draw them here once more.
I know that my applause from men is great;
But they *may* praise for that I am a King,
And not because my verse is excellent—
Yet that's not so; all poets I surpass;
Why not, is not the very language mine?
"I'll do it; to Parnassus mount I'll go,
The Muses' earthly, long-deserted seat;

And there upon my wreathed lyre I'll play,
To see if I can draw, than beasts' or men's,
Ears more celestial to attend my strain."
The royal poet was a man of faith,
Faith in himself, and in himself alone;
He also was a much-producing man,
Who, in addition to a nation's care,
Found time to scribble many epics down,
And deemed it sport to scale Parnassus' steeps.
And now to steep Parnassus' side he'll go,
To draw the heaven-fled Muses down again,
And make them list once more to mortal strain.
But he decides not as a king to go,
But as a poet merely; 'tis better thus,
For thus the vulgar throng will not obstruct.
And so the king dressed like a common man,
And now no one would know him for a king.
Alas! alas! his crown and robes laid by,
The king looked strangely like another man.
But, strange to say, he took his crown along,
To be put on when he reached Hippocrene.
And now he issues forth, a king no more,
But just a common man 'mong other men;
To be pushed, jostled, stared at, like the rest.
And he was elbowed by full many a clown,
Who, had he known but what his bags contained,
Had kneeled and cried aloud, "God save Thee,
King!"
Alas! alas! how easily is lost
The difference 'tween a king and common man!
And so he passed, and so he came at last
Unto his journey's end, and without toil;

For now *no* pilgrimage is much of toil,
Unless that one should vow to go on foot;
And this our royal minstrel did not do,
For gouty walking is no sinecure.
The royal poet on Parnassus stood.
Alas the scene! What Muse had e'er been there!
Upon the brink of once-fair Hippocrene
The poet stood. Alas! what saw he there!
It showed the shepherd's, not the Muses', care;
For from the fount their flocks were won't to drink,
And in its tide Bos quenched her summer thirst,
Meet symbol of the prosy, coin-cursed age!
The royal one was slightly disconcerted,
But ne'ertheless, he oped his traveling bags,
Took thence his crown and rich-wrought royal robes;
And so proceeded to array himself.
Nor had he failed to bring his ornaments,
Symbols of rank, but birth-bestowed, not won;
And these be donned, admired himself, and waited.
But long he did not have to wait; above,
E'en on the outer crust of heaven's realms,
There stood the sacred Nine, as is their wont,
And viewed the things below—their seat of old.
They saw the stranger standing by the fount,
Yea, his glittering grandeur pierced so far;
And much they wondered what could be his quest
And, as he still remained, they must descend;
And down they came, like twilight-sailing doves.
The poet heard their whirring wings above,
And looked aloft, and there behind the Nine,
Circling around him in slow, gentle flight.

And at short distance from him they did light,
And stood awhile, like modest maids, *abeigh.*

But soon the poet beckoned them to come.
Among themselves a moment they conferred,
And then obeyed; and thus they did approach;
First came Melpomene, stern tragic Queen,
With louring brow, sour mouth, and savage eyes;
And at the sight the royal minstrel quaked.
The next came Terpischore, the Dancing Girl;
Her nimble feet scarce seemed to touch the earth.
The next came Thalia, sweet, fresh and fair,
With laughing eyes, red cheeks, and jolly gait,
And all the world did seem to smile with her.
Next, Urania, in star-spangled robe,
Close-guarding Mistress of the starry sky.
Next came Euterpe, and she held the lyre,
On which the royal minstrel later played.
Truth-loving Clio was the next in line,
Veracious Mistress of Herodotus.
Next came Erato, Venus' advocate;
And from her watery eyes came Cupid's darts.
Next to the last, sweet Polyhymnia came,
Humming as she walked some sacred song.
Last, Calliope, grandest of them all,
Stately contriver of the noblest works.

So, round the royal poet the Muses stood;
And by degrees their shyness wore away,
And they began to talk with him, and he
With them. And much they were impressed with him.
They praised his soft, which hands, his lofty form;
His noble features, and his gorgeous robes;

And much admired the glittering ornaments
That o'er his ample bosom scarce found space.
And, when they had fed full their curious eyes,
(For they were women, you must understand)
They were much pleased, and whispered each to each,
That here at last was one who could, no doubt,
The music of all earthly lyres surpass,
And e'en the strains of Israfel excell.
But note the changes on the dumb things 'round,
Caused by the presence of these heavenly maids:
The grass, dust-trodden, 'gan to spring again;
Again the roused birds began to sing;
Fresh breezes in the stand-still air began,
And fanned the hot cheeks of the listless day.
The hoof-wrought fount its stagnant stupor lost,
And leaped and sparkled like a thing of life.
Such welcome greets the Maids where'er they come,
And such is their effect in soul of man.
Nor were the Sacred Nine all unconcerned
At thus revisiting their earthly seat;
But each in kind her own emotion showed.
Right glad they were to visit earth once more,
And yet they were more near to tears than smiles,
As they beheld the ravages which men
Upon their once-beloved earth had wrought.
And, in this thought, the feet of Terpischore
One moment would be still, next dance for joy.
E'en Thalia's laughing face was sober once;
And kind Erato's tears fell thick and fast;
And tragedy's Queen her stern aspect relaxed,

And pleasing melancholy seemed to feel.
But Clio, recording Muse, with eye exact,
Surveyed the present, with the past compared,
And rather liked to note the precise change,
Than seem to be affected either way.
Thus each, in different way, her mind revealed;
All, save Urania; she, star-decked maid,
Had naught in common with the things of earth;
High up among the spheres is her abode,
And e'en this present visit to the earth
Was rather from *complaisance* than desire.

But to our tale: The earth-descended Nine,
As soon as their emotions were calmed down,
Demanded of the royal bard a song,
As proof and precedent of what he could do.
And nothing sacred, the royal bardling heard;
For why? as soon as they had come in sight,
And he had seen their actions, heard their speech,
This was his verdict: "Ha! and are these, then,
The maidens men have found so hard to please?
Well, much I pity the poor, ignorant past;
But more I pity the poor witless wight
That could not entertain these simple maids!"

So, nothing loth, except the reluctance
That every artist naturally feels
At practicing his art 'fore ears unfit,
He took from Euterpe's hand the offered lyre;
(He thought to play but a short strain or so,
Just to show the Girls how far behind
The age they were; then take his leave of them,
And home again; and leave the stupid place.)
And at this action the expectant Maids,

(Their soul-scintillant eyes star-like were glowing)
Thinking to hear such bursts as n'er before
Did greet the ears of mortals or of Gods,
Stand 'round; and so the bard prepared to play.
One draught of maddening Hippocrene he quaffed,
And felt it coursing wildly through his veins;
Then o'er the strings his sanguine fingers swept.
Alas! for those of us who all through life
Have judged our powers by the praise of men.
Alas! how different may the verdict be
When we submit it to the Queens of Taste!
And so it proved, for the first sounds, alas!
Had scarcely, on the new-born breezes borne,
Been welcomed by the listening Muses' ears,
Than, like frightened wild-fowl, with rapid wing
They beat the air, and madly sought the sky.
Not hastier did the witches issue forth,
Their orgies broken by O'Shanter's yell,
Than did these Maids the realms of heaven seek.
Their rasping wings a rustling clamor made;
And none looked back, save Thalia. But she,
Orpheus-like, behind her glanced; and there
To her amazed sight translated stood,
(Or was it disguise-doffed) the royal bard:
Upon his brow were waving ass's ears;
And to *her* now his music sounded like
The falling cadence of that creature's song.
The cerulean dome had swallowed up
The heaven-steering maids; the waving air,
Made tremulous by their flight, was quiet again,
Ere the royal bard recovered from the shock.

But by degrees he understood the scene;
His pride reared up, and raged his azure blood.
At the receding forms his clenched hand
He shook, and said: "These foolish maids, it seems,
Know not good music when they hear it played."
But soon his mind another cue pursued:
"Why, what a dream have I had!" cried the bard.
"Methought, as on this stone I sat asleep,
The Muses came and bade me play for them;
And so I did; but breaking slumber chased
The genii from their task ere 'twas complete.
Hence, ere they heard my song, or I, their praise,
The Muses fled; for no man, while awake,
Can ever hope a living Muse to see."
While saying this the bard had changed his clothes;
And now the king is common clay again;
He next, being ready to desert the place,
Cast a large stone in Hippocrene, and fled.

"OLD SPECK."

My name is Benjamin Bugg, and I reside in that part of Illinois sometimes called "Egypt," though whether so nicknamed because the inundations of the Mississippi resemble those of the Nile, or because the inhabitants look and act like mummies, I cannot tell. In point of brevity I am usually called "Ben"; and, from various motives I have been called almost everything else. Oh! it is excellent to be, like Falstaff, "not only witty in one's self, but the cause that wit is in other men"; but to be endowed with only the latter part of this condition is surely miserable.

Infinite are the troubles that boys frequently inherit in their names; and by this I have no reference to being born to wealth or honor, poverty or shame, but merely speaking of the name as a word; and hence, of the humorous associations of which it is capable. In this respect, I never heard the name of anyone whom I will allow to have been more unfortunate than myself. My troubles from this

source were rendered much more grevious by the fact that outside my father's family—he having no known relatives—I know no one of a name with ours, to share the brunt of attack. And, I may mention parenthetically, I have not yet succeeded in finding my Lady Bugg.

As a punishment for the drowsy habit I once contracted of sometimes keeping my pillow in press until a rather late hour in the morning, I was frequently addressed as "Bed Bugg." And as a result of the unavoidable fault of my hair being slightly ruddy, I have learned to answer, or rather, to *not* answer, at least not civilly, to "Lightning Bugg." Once, when for the first time I rejoined my playmates after a long siege of the yellow jaundice, they one and all expressed their delight in loud and repeated yells of "Punkin Bugg"; and a derisive "Tater Bugg" snapped out in mockery of the embarassing way the pigment cells of my face have of huddling together, has sounded the onset of many a boyish battle.

Briefly, I am not acquainted with a single humble namesake, whose name has not, at some time or another, been found interchangeable with mine. All my sobriquets I have endured, too, under certain conditions, without coming to blows, except one. At no time, at any place, nor under any circumstances, has anyone ever applied the vulgar patronymic of that humble black beetle that tumbles its spherical, merdy incubator about for so long without burying it, to me, without measuring manhood with me. This is one consolation, and I have but

one other. It is, that I have never yet looked upon a face, as its owner heard my name for the first time, without being able to distinguish faint smiles, glancing up through the efforts at composure. Experience has taught me to judge almost exactly on such occasions of the person's self-control, manners and sense of humor. But my present intention is not to write a history of the juvenile troubles arising from being cursed with a name of great punning possibilities; but to relate the one incident of my life with which my name had nothing to do.

One day in early Spring, while I was yet too young to assist in the fields, my mother called me from play, and told me she would give me enough new yarn to make a ball, against the opening of the Winter's term of school, if I would break "Old Speck" of wanting to sit, and cause her to return to the occupation of egg-laying. It will do you no harm to know that the "Old Speck" referred to was an ancient, respectable hen; perhaps the most important member of our then gallinaceous complement. She was rather a small hen, of unknown age, and indefinite breed, and was given her name in consequence of the peculiar markings of her head and neck.

Now, as to why my mother did not want her to sit at that particular time, I do not know. Perhaps she lacked the eggs; or, it is entirely possible that some misunderstanding had arisen between them because of the hen's assuming too much authority. But whatever may have induced my mother to think a change necessary in "Old Speck's" plans, in the

contract she made with me for effecting the aforesaid change nine years have enabled me to discover not a single legal flaw, and but one moral one: to-wit, she had already exhausted every legitimate remedy known to science for causing that same change, the score always running in the hen's favor.

I was in raptures. New yarn! A ball at school! In those days where I lived, the orthodox way of coming by a ball was, first to humbly inquire if the family wardrobe contained any superannuated foot-gear. If any was found which, by the family council held for the purpose, was decided to be beyond the regeneration of the darning needle, you might be lucky enough to get some of it. If you were, you went to work with great labor and pains to unravel, perhaps, the work of some defunct grandmother. Having done this, you proceeded, out of the kinky threads, all the "bounce" of which had been trodden out by the feet of generations two or three times removed, spliced with innumerable knots, to wind your ball.

The above being the conditions generally governing the production of the home-made ball, it was by no means a too common object; and its possession at school gave its owner considerable precedence. Beyond question, it constituted him sole and absolute umpire of the game. As for the "store-bought" article, it was seldom or never seen in the country. And now, oh unlooked-for fortune! I was to have one out of new yarn; yarn fresh from the hank. New, new as the cords with which Delilah bound the puissant Samson; but not, please fate, to prove likewise ineffectual. Out of the blue realms of expecta-

tion, came, softly spinning, a perfect sphere of closely-wound thread; which, in its revolutions, revealed all the colors of a dying dolphin. It circled round and round my head, it nestled against my cheek, it did everything, in short, save allowing me to grasp it with my hand. Suddenly I remembered that the tantalizing evasion of the colored globe was due to the fact that the stipulated performance necessary to its possession was yet neglected.

The characters are cast; a hen old enough to be "set" in her ways, that had evinced maternal ambitions, and a twelve-year old boy, to whom was offered, as an incentive to his supplanting these ambitions with others more desired, the article, whch, of all the things in the catalogue, he most coveted.

Concerning the course of treatment that I gave the hen during this contract, I have but little to say. I do not recommend it to poulterers, but merely relate it as the output of enthusiastic ignorance and confidence. Had I known then what I do now, I never would have done what I did. I have since come to respect motives, such as impel hens taking the nest, as the most powerful on earth. I have since known them to remain on exposed nests in calm defiance of the utmost rigors of the weather—while they were covered with snow, drenched with rain or blinded with sleet. I have known them to remain while the chicken-snake coiled its loathsome length beneath them, and once I saw one frozen on her nest, stiff and dead, as truly a martyr as ever was any man. But if, after all the influence which I affirm these scenes have exerted over me, any

unreasonable old lady chicken should still retain an unfounded prejudice against me, I trust it will be entirely eliminated by my saying that I am profoundly principled against the use and spread of machines that rob them of their stationary function.

In order that you may understand the first effort I made to render the visionary ball palpable, a little explanation will probably be necessary. At that time I had my own reasons as to the cause of everything I had seen. The explanation I assigned to the conduct of hens, such as Old Speck was then exemplifying, was their indignation at having their eggs continually filched from them as fast as they were laid. This theory I fortified by the fact that I had often found, in out-of-the-way places, nests full of eggs, with no hen about them. Hence, the way to get a hen to relinquish her nest, was to assuage her anger, and effect a "restoration of confidence," by restoring her eggs. Slightly uneasy in my mind as to why my mother had not tried this, I went to her and requested the loan of a number of eggs. Of course, she desired to know what I wanted with them, and I told her why and how I intended to use them. As her risibles were never far below the surface, you may imagine the result. When she had sufficient breath, she gave me my first insight into the real cause of hens wanting to sit.

As if to keep in sight of the rapidly-vanishing ball, I walked out to the hen house and looked around. Silent and motionless as gravestones, sat a number of hens, turkeys and guinea fowls, among which I recognized Old Speck, in elevated nests,

with a few geese and ducks sitting on the ground beneath them. I had a happy idea. As I entered their home, they seemed utterly oblivious of my presence; until, just as I was about to close down on the object of my entering, that seemingly inert fowl suddenly made a number of rapid movements, and, almost before I realized that her intentions towards me were not of the most peaceful, she bestowed upon my extended hands a number of painful compliments, in quick succession, after the manner of the woodpecker. I withdrew the offending members with more dispatch than dignity; and, as if to salve their hurts, brought them in sharp contact with the low roof of the place in so doing. Without giving the little stirred fountain of bad words, that had bubbled up to my lips, time to overflow, I seized the pugnacious old hen in such a manner as to effectually curtail her pecking purchase.

Having once rendered my captive incapable of causing pain, magnanimous thoughts began to succeed. Notwithstanding what my mother had said about "instinct" and "natural," Old Speck had greatly strengthened my theory as to what caused hens to take the veil, as it were, only different. I could scarcely help thinking that I was dealing with a justifiable misanthrope. And, what with the melting nature of this thought, and the mistiness of memory, I am by no means confident that I did not let fall a few drops of liquid compassion on the old hen's speckled neck. But, though all the fountains of my sympathy were broken up, I did not release my hold on the aforesaid neck, which felt like a

piece of barbed wire, with a thin sheet of rubber, stuck full of feathers, wrapped loosely about it. I did not feel that the occasion, solemn as it was, demanded that I should feed her—for feeding I intended—until I could find something less near and dear to me, something, in a word, with which it would be less painful to part, than tidbits of my person. And so, resting her trenchant breast-bone on my arm—till when I never felt the full sharpness of the proverb, "setting hens never fatten"—I set out catering.

I first procured and presented to the deported fowl some shelled corn; holding it in one hand, and giving her sufficient capital freedom to allow of her substitute for eating. She pecked vigorously at it, but never a grain could she eat, because she always clearly missed the corn, invariably hitting the parts of my hand where it was not. And when I put the corn on the ground, she seemed suddenly to have lost her appetite. I spent a few minutes in hopeless coaxing, and then I thought, "ah, this faulty marksmanship is the result of her long fast, or it is a modest hint that her throat is shrunk until she can no longer swallow the corn grains."

As feeling of the old hen's neck nowise contradicted the latter part of this conclusion, I then procured and offered her some wheat; and beheld an exact tableau of the former scene. Concluding that she was either too proud or too modest to eat in captivity, I determined to liberate her. With misgivings I did so; when back to and upon her nest she went, not as a crow flies, for that suspicious

bird might meet a man with a gun on his shoulder, but as straight as ever a hound went to a hen's nest. And yet a hound, at all versed in the tactics of egg-stealing, would be likely to employ in approaching the nest a circuitous route, which he would be less likely—indeed, which he would have less time—for taking, if, as sometimes happens, a stream of hot water were playing on his back, I will say, as straight as ever a hound went *from* a hen's nest. But as even this leaves a haunting sense of imperfection, from the mental picture of a dog under such treatment, I will discard figures, and say that setting her feathers and beginning to emit the peculiar "cluck" which distinguishes hens with, or about to have, families, she went as directly to and onto her nest as she could have gone without flying; an occurrence, the like of which I do not remember ever to have noticed either before or since.

I did not give chase, because that would have spoiled the other remedy I meant to try; but I followed slowly along behind. That "cluck" sounded a death knell to my hopes. It gave me a new and discouraging idea of the odds I had to face. As I stood before her while she arranged herself comfortably on her eggless eyry, I understood that to win the case I must reinstill into her a love of the liberty she had forsaken. But how? In the lack of other means of communication, I determined to try pantomime. Her nest was near the door, and commanded a good view outside. Standing, therefore, as far to one side as I could and still see my audience, I began silently with one hand to point out the at-

tractions, while with the other I endeavored to convey my meaning to my uninterested subject. Perhaps it was the mental concentration that enables me now, after the lapse of several years, whenever I wish, to see the picture as plainly as I saw it then.

Beginning with the right hand side, the first live object in view was the "Hermit." This was the appropriate title we gave to a queer member of the goose tribe, supposed to be a male. From downy goslinage he had exhibited a strong liking for solitude, and all his life long he never found a kindred spirit. He was the most listless, shiftless thing I ever saw. He never seemed to make any effort to get anything to eat, but stood around, sometimes for hours in the same place, usually with one foot on the ground and the other hidden in the feathers on his belly—as he stood then—and how he lived was a mystery. I tried to arouse Old Speck's jealously on the occasion of the old rooster's clumsy gallantry in denying himself a recently unearthed tidbit in favor of his female companions; but I felt myself defeated in this by the ease with which the favored ones, when they had swallowed the fruit of his abnegation, and he had tried to advance his suit on that score, turned away from him. Three important feathered mothers were piloting their broods about in search of worms, and one was being piloted about by her brood. This latter was one in whose case the laws of nature had been transgressed by obliging her to follow in the wake of a covey of never-tiring ducklings, and as she came in sight I barely repressed a marring smile, as I recalled a comic con-

test I had witnessed at the brook's side a day or two previous, between maternal anxiety and instinct, and the almost crazing defeat maternal anxiety had suffered. Of the other three winged chaperons, one was clucking herself hoarse, and wearing her nails into the "quick" in trying to interest a single little, dejected, drooping, disappointed-looking follower. Another was in charge of a whole juvenile army; there must have been thirty-five or forty of them, and their straying dispositions seemed to cause the patient mother an infinite deal of trouble. The other was caring for what I always considered the proper number for a brood of chicks—the number of syllables in the longest word in Shakespeare.

But what did Old Speck see or care about all this! Out on hypnotic pantomime! It may be good in its place, but I was misapplying it. Doubtless a less emotional, a less enthusiastic, audience never witnessed a performance. My patience was threadbare. I was at the terminus of my resources. With a sinking heart, I turned away. The ball was invisible. True, my representation may have been slightly imperfect, in consequence of my once or twice losing patience or self-control, and either smiling or hissing "drat the hen," but even with that, it should have been received less hypercritically than it was.

Between this defeat and the next special remedy I tried occurred a considerable lapse of high meditation and low activity. I dared not mention the failure to my mother. I feared she would declare the bargain off, and strange to speak, she never men-

tioned the subject to me. Indeed, she appeared to have forgotten all about it, and never spoke to me about it during the entire summer—for these operations occupied a summer—only once or twice, when she warned me not to try anything that might harm the hen.

I improved the idle time by piling my antagonist's nest full of stones. Hardly a day passed that I did not chase her down, and this was no baby's trick. For she soon learned to make use of the convenience of so timing her recuperative vacations that at the first glimpse of me, she would observe a flying exit. And the emaciated old bird could scud like a road-runner, too, and the question of endurance never seemed to appeal to her. It was amusing to note the evolution in the tactics of her retreat, caused by the chase. For awhile I caught her by slipping to the hen-house door, and closing it suddenly, but her alertness soon rendered this no longer possible, and then there was no way to procure her but by simply running her down. During the first chases she had the advantage, in being able to go into places where I could not follow, and from whence it took some time to dislodge her. But I soon rendered all such retreats impervious. She then relied on her dodging, hiding, running through thickets and flying over fences; but practice soon made me as proficient in these branches of the science as herself. It was then that she decided to try it on the basis of honest speed, and at her first sight of me she would start off across the countryside like a mad dog, usually going in one direction,

until she was either overtaken or the pursuit relinquished; and I do not blush to say that more times than one I withdrew, leaving her mistress of the chase.

Until now I am not infrequently entertained with narratives of a small barefooted, bareheaded, breathless boy following after a fleeting fowl, which traveled sometimes by foot and sometimes by wing, but which generally proceeded under their co-operation. During these prolonged heats I acquired a length of wind rivaling that of an Indian messenger, and the hen did not seem to lose any. Whenever I caught her I would hold her in captivity the remainder of the day, stroking her, trying to get her to eat, which she never did, and exhausting all the other plans I could think of in a vain attempt to make her docile; commonly concluding the day's efforts by tucking her head under her wing, putting her to sleep and watching her absurd antics as she awoke.

One morning, while the dew was yet on, as I was going out for an early course, my attention was attracted by the strange actions of a number of chickens. It looked as if about all of the unincumbered fowls of the place had formed a circle about some dangerous object, which they were straining their necks to understand, uttering at the same time a peculiar cry. Upon investigation I found their distress to be caused by a large dead snake, and it inspired an idea. As if nothing had happened, I presented myself before Old Speck, in the accouterments, the meaning of which she had learned to

know so well, pantaloons rolled to the thigh, sleeves rolled to the shoulder and no hat. She beat a frantic retreat, and I feigned to follow until she was out of sight. I then took the dead snake, razed the rocky pyramid I had raised for Old Speck's comfort, and coiled the dead snake in its place, bringing its head up through the center in a very striking manner, and hid to watch developments.

When, after what seemed to my impatience an age, the old hen returned, I fancied she looked surprised as she peered narrowly all about her before flying up to the upright plank that formed the front of the row of nests. Once upon it she was too busy keeping her balance, rehearsing her troubles, and holding her feathers at the proper angle, to notice the snake, until she was almost ready to place her foot on it. When at last the sight of the warlike reptile did penetrate her self-concentration, she stopped suddenly, lost her balance, came near falling, stood a moment in indecision, and then flew cackling out into the yard.

And now, oh ball of wool, with all the colors of Jacob's coat, thou mayest come from thy long retreat and play once more about my head. Why not? As Old Speck flew, did she not exactly mimic the noise with which any hen, when she has deposited an egg, heralds the event to the world? Did it make any difference whether the announcement came before or after the performance? I thought not. To be sure, it customarily *did* come after, but I could see no substantial reason why it should. I started to the house to demand the reward, but just

as I was on the point of asking for it, I changed my mind. After awhile I went out again. From the greatest possible distance I surveyed the nest, from which I had removed the snake. Old Speck occupied it! She meant to lay! My heart leaped into my mouth. I returned to the house and listened for the announcement. The other hens were all done laying by this time, so if I heard one I knew it would be Old Speck.

In feverish impatience I listened, listened, listened. My restlessness became unbearable. I *must* investigate. The old hen, doubtless thinking the deferred race now due, lost no time in starting, revealing thereby, of course, no egg. The ball went into extreme aphelion, and I learned that for absolute certainty of performance accompanying promise, performance should always lead. And I have since found out that this rule obtains in other businesses than that of the poultry. No, not every time some person, or chicken, goes about loudly cackling cata-cata-catastrophe! has any catastrophe really accurred.

After the above came a long series of commonplace remedies, during which the ball was not sighted once.

It was about three weeks after the serpentine episode that an itinerant showman came. He employed the school houses for his exhibitions, which ranged from magic lantern to legerdemain. He had among his professional paraphernalia a small battery, from which I received my first experience of electricity. I made a confidante of this peripatetic

entertainer, letting him into the great ambition of my life, and asking his advice concerning its realization. He proposed at once giving her an electric shock. I readily consented, and we went out to arrange matters. We removed the stones and refilled the nest with straw, in which we hid the two wires of the battery. We then secreted the motor behind the chicken domicile, and the showman remained with it to operate it. In the hope that she would get a foot on each wire, we waited, and the only way I have of explaining her conduct a few hours later is by concluding that she *did get a foot on each wire.*

The feathers are the best index to the mental, moral and physical condition of the chicken. Whenever you see a large-legged, water-jointed cockerel, stalking stupidly about, always in the most conspicuous place available, toward which, without any deplumation, the sardonic Diogenes might have pointed and, with equal relevancy, said, "Behold the man of Plato," you can cover the situation with some sort of an apology by remembering that he is shedding, or rather, *has shed.* If, a few weeks later, you meet him again and find his unattractive outside variegated by a thick sowing of blue points, you may dismiss your fears, for the chances are that he will have a new plumage before the first snowfall, if he should live to need it. If you should happen to be making a midnight call on a company of sleeping fowls, and their feathers should suddenly begin to "rouse and stir as life were in them," let it not forestall your purpose; they are only taking a fresh breath. The fashion of fledging that denotes

the sitting hen is too well known, and so sore a subject with me that I will waste no words describing it. The arrangements of the feathers when two cocks are embattled, and when they have found a snake, is very similar, but by close observation you can distinguish between them. But if you should see something entirely different from all the above, a time when the feathers strive to get free in all directions from the fowl, as if she were in the vacuum of an ordinary cyclone, you may, for aught I know, safely conclude that she has been indulged in an electric current.

When the violent and repeated appeals which the above described experiment made to the strolling showman's sense of the ludicrous had subsided sufficient for my obtaining a hearing, I, in as solemn, important a tone as I could command, requested him never to speak of it to anyone; and he, between paroxysms, consented.

Concerning the success, for my purpose, of the galvanic treatment—of which my accomplice was much more sanguine before it was tried than after—I had been hopeful and despondent by turns. I had grown callous to defeat. I had learned that failure is an entity. I had been made to understand that there were other wills in the world besides my own, and most of all, I had never at that time heard of the value of electricity in restoring lost virility. Hence the resplendent orb had not left its distant orbit to play the St. Elmo's fire about my devoted head. But it had become visible at intervals, shining like the full moon when rifted clouds are floating

over the sky. But when, after a brief respite, I went out to investigate and found her sitting, not on the nest, but on the upright plank before it, the firmament cleared. But, oh short-lived triumph! not ten minutes later she sat as fearlessly on her nest as ever she did.

I have since become convinced that much of the hopelessness of the project in which I was then engaged was caused by the manner of fowl with which I dealt. And in this I do not speak of her individual qualities of obstinacy and determination, though they were surely preternatural, but of the clan to which she belonged. She was not included in any defined breed, but belonged to that infinite mass of life, extending from man to microbe, termed "scrub." Be their faults as they are, most of the members of this innumerable family are full of independence and native energy. The chickens, I especially remember, built their nests usually in the margin of brush heaps, or in leafy fence corners, laid their eggs, sat on and hatched them, and often reared the brood without any human aid whatever; and grew to be considerably larger than partridges. This was the hardy, strong-willed class of fowls with which I had to deal, and in the rememberance of them the resoluteness and nature of varieties of later introduction is to me a mere myth. They seem to walk about in corpulent indifference, without enough purpose or spirit to get out of the back yard, unless it is to get into the front one. They appear to mould their conduct into the minds of their owners with perfect unconcern—to be totally destitute

of personality. And it is my observation that this state of affairs is the unavoidable companion of blue blood and the apotheosis of pedigree, wherever they are found. Well, I say, if my manoeuvers had been directed against some hen of a present type, the result might have been different.

I am too ignorant of the processes whereby new denominations of chickens, or anything else, are evolved, to offer any hobbled reason as to why they should tend towards lessening the candidate's fierceness of affection. Also, the origin of the "scrub" is a mystery to me. Take for example, the desiccated vixen against whose stronghold I spent a summer in campaigning, did her ancestry once stalk about in the insolent pride of knowing that their veins held registered blood, and that their lease of life was fortified by pedigrees clear as that of Othello's handkerchief? Conceding this, by what dereliction of destiny were they reduced to their then state? As in the case of the withered survivors of the Pyncheon deterioration, did their own conceited exclusiveness so prey upon them, that finally they retained nothing of their former gentility but a faded rememberance? Or, being owned and operated by people in whose manners heraldry had so scanty a footing, did this cause them by degrees to lose all respect for caste, and plunge so vigorously into the ordinary business of life? Or had they been scrubs from the beginning, and had their remotest ancestry never known escutcheon? If they were degenerated gentility, I hold it to be of tolerable certainty that they were an amalgamation of sev-

eral different cliques. But whatever may have been their genesis, their exodus is well known. A few years after my contest with that determined member of the dwarfish race, their benighted owners discovered that in other parts of the world there were fowls much more attractively advertised than were their own, for flavor, size, rapidity of growth, egg-producing capacity, and all other possible or impossible accomplishments peculiar to chickens; and they began to import freely, the result of which was: that small but hardy race, which had for so many years filled the housewife's ideality to the brim, passed like the dodo.

One night, as I lay in the window's width of weakened moonlight that fell across my bed, being barred from slumber by the ever-present dilemma, as if some sympathizing angel had sent it coasting down one of the slanting pencils of silver, a new and novel idea slid into my brain. With the suppleness of reviving hope, I sprang from my tumbled truckle, and procured a good strong cord. Having this, I glided over the dewy grass to the hennery, if I may be allowed an original simile, like a ghost. I scarcely paused at the open door. As a trophy of one feline leap I had my truculent adversary by the neck for once in my life without the displacement of a single particle of cuticle; and no sound, save the swish of the tail of my night shirt in the night wind.

I then looped my string securely about her scaly feet, and when the old rooster had made room for it, which he did after some good-natured chuckling, I tied her fast upon the perch. After waiting a mo-

ment to see if she would try to fly off, I returned to bed and to sleep, but not simultaneously. A resplendent sphere, by its restless flitting about the room, now playing around my pillow, now retreating to the dark corners, from whence with difficulty I could persuade it to come into the shaft of moonlight that I might note its glistening colors, kept me awake for sometime. And when at last I did sink into shallow slumber, it was to be flattered by dazzling dreams of that same glowing globe. Yea, like a bat in a garret, it flew my room the livelong night.

In consequence of the disturbing presence of my restless companion on that eventful night, I was rather tardy in waking on the following morning. Indeed, to speak the embarrassing truth, even the interest I had to see the result of the night's ruse, coupled with the universal injunctions—always accompanied with uncomfortable threats as to what would be done in case they were not obeyed forthwith—of early rising that were hurled incessantly at me, did not succeed in separating me and the bedclothes until breakfast was over. When at last I had gotten sufficiently free of the almost endless series of after-naps, to rise and dress, I visited the scene of the previous night's adventure; when, oh my eyes! what did I see? There before my astonished gaze hung Old Speck in about as topsy-turvy a posture as ever I saw anything. Her emblematic plumage, which I had seen assume so many different arrangements, greatly encouraged by the ample volume of her skin, and the sparseness to which her occupa-

tion and troubles had reduced it, all now pointed one way—downward. With trembling hands I cut her down. No signs of life were apparent except that she was not stiff. Her withered comb was black. Her heart, which only the day before when I had given her a long and, to me, successful chase, had made her entire body tremble by the violence of its throbbing, was, for aught I could discern, motionless as a millstone at midnight.

While I stood in a quandary, holding the hen in my hands, wondering if anyone had seen her, and if so, what then; and if they had not, if I could destroy her and put any probable fiction on her disappearance, my mother's voice, "short, sharp and decisive," came in quest of me. "Oh, I thought, the game's up," as with faltering steps and downcast eyes I walked slowly towards the house.

I found my mother standing in the doorway. In one hand she held my castoff night gown; the other held a portion of my bed clothes; upon both of which were several blurred splotches of some substance, to all appearances, from the hen roost, the presence of which my mother was morbidly anxious for me to quickly explain. Alas, yes, alas! Instantly the truth burst upon me. The fright occasioned by my sudden appearance beneath the feathered perchers on the night before had acted, as it is sometimes said to act on men, as a deobstruent, and this was the appalling consequence. From not knowing whether anyone but myself had seen the pendant corpse of Old Speck, I dared not heed the prompting of my alert imagina-

tion. I told the exact truth. When my mother had heard it she ordered me to go at once and bring the defunct to her. I went; but bring the defunct to her! I am a Baron M— if the old lady was not walking about in a dazed, undecided manner, and seemed to be trying to collect sufficient energy to make the ascent up to her nest; but at her first glimpse of me her old horror of being caught and her instinct of flight came upon her, and she was off like an ostrich running before a sandstorm.

Leaving the vanishing fowl either to discover that she was not pursued, or to run on in blind ignorance, just as might be, with half my burden lifted, I returned to my mother and reported what I had seen. She made no comment about it, but ordered me to my breakfast, and as I entered the house I saw Old Speck disappear over the brow of a distant hill.

Well, the punishment I received for fouling the sheets remains to this day a mystery to me. My mother said not another word about it until bedtime that night. And then, in the most casual manner possible, she remarked that as chastisement for the unfortunate occurrence of the night before, I would be obliged to sleep without a night gown until wash day. Oh! in the name of sanity, what did she mean? The castigation of sleeping without my night gown! I scarce dared trust my ears. Had she forgotten that not five nights before I had stoutly refused to don the swathing nuisance, and had capitulated only when the seasoned peach tree branch had been taken down from its awful position alongside the rifle in

the gun rack over the door? Had she been too absent-minded, or otherwise engaged, to have observed that "oft in the stilly night, ere slumber's chains had bound me," I made shift to put off that evidence of culture, and secret it under the bedclothes till morning, and that much of my late rising had been occasioned by the solitary opportunities for which I had to lie in wait, that I might get out of bed without my forbidden disrobing being detected? To deepen the mystery, my mother, who has a genius for narration, related to every available auditor, as long as it could at all be considered current—and till today it is very easily and often suggested—the story of my night scheme, and the temporary jakes into which I was converted by the excited fowls; never failing to enlarge eloquently, in conclusion, on the grand specimen of moral punishment that she administered in its rebuke.

The preverse termination of this last plan dashed my hopes not a little. The splendid confidence, which all along had upborne me so superbly, was beginning to wane. Until then I had fed reviving hope on the carcass of dead failure, and it had thriven marvelously; but now it seemed to turn away, as if it were either sated of the forlorn repast, or else the last thrust had proven too much for it. Why indeed had all the remedies I had tried, not only failed, but failed so disastrously, so ludicrously, to me? I began to conceive a vague idea that some stern, invincible destiny was fighting for the old hen. And yet, I had no thought of giving over the contest. If there were a fate weaving its in-

visible, impregnable net about the sacred rights of Old Speck, there was no less tiring a fate goading me on to continual assault. And my mother's ominous silence, to what did it point? From the day of making the contract, she had scarcely spoken to me about it; never asking me how I was getting on, what methods I employed, or anything; and for my part I dared not broach the subject to her. Had she forgotten it, or was she only jesting at the time?

There is perhaps no virtue more native to boyhood than charity, and of all the numerous forms it takes none is more common than the one that hurries him off, often the impetuosity not allowing time for leave-taking, on glorious summer days to the cool shade of the brook's side, to feed angleworms to the hungry fishes. I was no more exempt from this laudable failing than other boys, and many are the days I have spent in its cultivation, sitting all day long distributing worm after worm with imperturbable patience to the esurient tribe, usually starting for home at nightfall with two or three little perch fish at the end of a forked twig—how different they looked from the flashing, dancing fellows, every fin erect, I had drawn out of the water at the end of my line only a few hours before! These boyhood whales were usually from two and one-half to three inches in length, but perch are wide for their length, you know; and were not infrequently offered, not as a burnt—unless the cook made some mistake, for which she was severely reprimanded—but as a peace, offering to conciliate the wrath of an incensed parent.

But my fishing during the summer of my engagement with Old Speck was a miserable failure. It was attended with every conceivable mishap. Often I forgot to take with me any bent pin and twine string tackle; at other times I forgot to crumble any earth over my worms, and when I reached the brook bank they would be in such a condition as to render it utterly useless to offer them to fishes of so epicurean a temperment as the ones for which I catered. But the most unflattering part of it all was the mean advantage the vigilant pisces took of my abstraction and pre-occupation of mind. I beleive they knew as well as myself of the abysses of auburn cogitation into which I was subject to falling, though they may not have devined the cause. But be that as it was, I do not think I got a nibble during the entire summer, but during one of them, and I would wake up out of it just in time to see my line, after having described all kinds of antics, drifting slowly back vertical; or, if I happened to be fishing with a float, to see it coming loitering to the surface, while the wary little bait-stealer lay safely in the cool, dark depths under the jutting stones. Thus, as I sat, day after day, on the bare-washed roots of the bending willows, the lower branches of which rested lazily in the placid bosom of the stream, long ere I had ever heard of the "Quaint Old Ike," the delicious thrill, the life of angling, of feeling something jerking at the end of one's line, reached me sadly dulled and dissipated, by reason of having come through so many folds of dense meditation. It was these same folds that caused me first to think of

Shrud Skeam, too, for which I heartily curse them till now.

As the individual mentioned in the conclusion of the last paragraph is to bear some part in the remainder of this story, a few lines concerning him would not perhaps be misapplied. He was universally reckoned the shrewdest, cleverest boy in the neighborhood for his age—a few years older than myself. He always carried the best jack knife at school, the result of his bartering and trafficing; and woe be unto the chattels of a younger or less acute boy who fell into his hands. He would wheedle him out of everything he had that was detachable, even the buttons on his coat. He was certainly an embryo broker, though whether his transactions will ever reach anything more valuable than pigs and calves or not, I do not know; they have not as yet. He used to keep my pockets as empty of all such schoolboy trinkets as knives, marbles, pencils, etc., as a winter birdsnest. And yet it was of this person that I determined to make my second confidant.

I was driven to this conclusion by two considerations. The first was, of course, to see if he could suggest anything to subjugate Old Speck. The second referred to the ball after it should be won. While although in the beginning I had revelled in the variegated brilliance of the imaginary ball, yet experience had taught me that to render the highest service, and thereby win the approbation of the school, its bright colors must be inclosed in a case of leather; and to this I had reluctantly consented. Now, of all accomplishments I ever have or have not acquired,

the one of cutting a piece of leather so that it will fit a ball, is one of the ones I have not acquired. But in this Shrud was pre-eminently proficient. Many balls were brought to him during a school term for this purpose, the owners giving him a half interest in them for the service. Now , I do not want anyone to think me so niggard, or generous, as you may choose to put it, as to believe that for a moment I allowed, even mentally, anyone to have half part of *my* ball. No, indeed! But I thought that perhaps I could hire him to cover it for me. And so, though my first confidence had turned out so ludicrously, I determined at my first convenience to try another.

It was not long after coming to this conclusion, that an opportunity for testing it presented itself. It was about the middle of one afternoon, as Shrud was passing our house, that I halted him on the bank of our stock pond, and told him all my troubles. He seemed deeply interested and as soon as I had finished he said: "Now, I'll tell you what to do. You go and catch the hen and bring her here to this pond and hold her under the water one minute. It'll break 'em every time. I've tried it time and again and never failed. You see, the water dissolves and washes away their resolution. Go bring her right now." I did so.

"Now," he said, when I returned with the hen, "you hold her under and I'll keep time," getting out an old battered patrimonial-looking watch for the purpose. With the hen firmly clasped in both hands, and my heart thumping with renewed hope

I waded into the pond, the craw-fish going backwards in front of me as I advanced, and the few survivors of once splendid coveys of "lucky-bugs" —I had bitten the heads off of myriads of them, because of a popular superstition that it brings good luck—scattering for parts remote.

With ceremonial deliberation I lowered the old hen into the clear water, and she endured it without a movement. After a little time a few bubbles broke above the submerged fowl. For a moment Shrud's face bore a troubled expression, but then it cleared and he said: "Oh, there comes your resolution." What eons of time are wrapped up in a single minute! If you try to hold your breath during the space you will get some idea of its length, but if it should ever be your fortune to hold, as a twelve-year-old boy, two hands full of warm throbbing, concentrated obstinacy, for stakes equal to the ones for which I held mine, you will, for aught I know to the contrary, have the entire eternity of its duration indelibly impressed upon you. At last Shrud said, "time's up," and I released my hold. The old hen rose to the surface like a piece of cork, swam to the opposite bank, clambered out and disappeared. Some people may not know that chickens can swim, but they can; at least one like Old Speck would never sink. As I looked at Shrud, as if in explanation of the incredibly long space I thought that minute to have covered, he said: "I had you to hold her a second over time for good count."

I waded out of the pond and sat down on the bank with Shrud for a talk. Although I was actual-

ly trembling with impatience to see the result of the experiment, wishing, however, to appear indifferent about it, I endeavored to lead the conversation along other lines, and in as nonchalant a tone as I could affect, I remarked, "By the way, Shrud, how do you always manage to be so lucky droppin' knives?" It may not be out of order to remark that the knife-dropping referred to was a certain clandestine exchange of schoolboy chattels, chiefly cutlery, much in favor with the boys of that time and place. The manner of it was as follows: The two participants stood facing each other, each with one hand above and one beneath the hands of his opposite, and each with one hand open to catch the article dropped by the other, and with one hand closed, holding the article to be dropped. At a given signal, each half unclosed a hand, letting whatever it contanied fall into the hand of the other, and the summit of proficiency was to do it so quickly that the by-standers could not tell who was worsted. After the "drop" something was repeated by the plungers, usually a rhyme, supposed to ratify the deal.

Shrud was noted as a boy who never got the little end in bargains of this kind, and I had often longed to know why. No conglomeration of miserable sides, blades, back-springs, rivets, etc.,—for the rule was "whole handle, whole blade or no trade"—concocted by older boys had ever succeeded in getting a good knife out of him. And though no boy in school dropped knives oftener than he did, yet I had often seen him standing before someone for the purpose, but just before the word "drop"

would be pronounced, as if guided by some unerring instinct, he would turn away—such action not being accounted dishonorable. And at that time, as if to give him a respite from his repeated assurances that Old Speck would not sit again, I determined to ask him how he did it.

He considered for quite awhile, with his chin resting on his knee, and then said: "Well, since you are going to hire me to cover your ball, I guess I might as well tell you. But mind, it's a secret, and don't you be telling anyone. Well, then, it's all in watching the fingers. Yes, look closely at the fellow's fingers, before you drop, and if you see the slightest movement or trembling in them, don't drop. Don't look at his face, for he'll be takin' care of that; but he won't be thinkin' about his fingers, and they'll betray him. This is the rule *I've* always followed, and I may say I'm not so bad at the business. And I've always found that whenever some boy wants to get an old no account knife off on you for a good one, if you'll just look straight at his fingers just before the word is spoken, you'll see them move just a little in spite of all he can do. But don't you tell anybody."

I did not talk with him long on this occasion; I was too anxious to see the result of the acquatic treatment, notwithstanding his continued asseverations that it would succeed. I invited him to go with me, and see if it had; but he declined, because of a certain coldness between himself and my mother. And so, having agreed to meet at the same place on the following Saturday afternoon, he to bring the

leather, and I, the yarn, and make the ball, we separated.

A paragraph descriptive of the scenes being actively enacted in my mind, as a result of the altitude to which Shrud's remedy and assurances had raised my long-prostrate hopes, might not be wasted. School was in session, and the noon-hour was being spent most gloriously in a kind of ball-game very much in favor at that time and place, and known as "deck on board." I, in my unquestioned umpireship, by virtue of sole ownership of the ball, have allowed the girls—whose striking consisted of holding the bat perfectly vertical as high above their heads as possible, and moving it almost imperceptibly forward some moments after the ball had passed, the result, I always thought, of the practice of sweeping cobwebs off the ceiling—to play with us today; but such indulgence must not be looked for often. And my! if the fellow who owns the best, the only, ball in school, cannot afford to be rather autocratic, who can?

The destiny of my side depends upon my three strikes; and I, standing in the striker's place, having thoroughly lubricated my hands with saliva, am ready to deliver them. Nervous; well, perhaps just a trifle; but it would not do to show it. The ball is thrown; a clear miss! Another; the same result! The nervous tension is getting dense. Another ball! Ah! That time it was fairly met! See it flying through the sky! That strike broke the jam, and set everything in motion. How my basemen (and women) did run! And how the opposite fielders

scurry after the ball! But now the teacher is getting down off the woodpile—his eyry for watching the game, and sharing the honors of umpireship with me—and starting to the house. Play fast, now! The evading ball is in the hand of one of the fielders at last, and he tries to throw it in; but his abandon not allowing him to see a tree that stands between him and the ring, the ball strikes it fairly, and rebounds almost back to him. And now they cry "lost ball." And now the fatal bell rings. The ball lost, and no time to hunt it! It must be admitted, however, that the catastrophe would have been much less tragic had I not just at that moment come in sight of the hen-house; and there, on her stone-lined nest, calmly drawing her wet feathers between her mandibles, to dry them, sat the immutable Old Speck.

I rubbed my eyes to make sure that it was not fantasy. I stood spellbound. But at the first sight of me, the old hen suddenly lost interest in the desiccating process, and raised her head as high as possible. And then I knew that my eyes were not fooling me; no fancy could ever suggest so characteristic an action. I stood and meditated for awhile. Was not some revenge due me? I thought there was. After a little mental figuring, I knew there was. I stooped and picked up a small stone that lay at my feet, and let drive at the old hen with all my strength. But she, possibly concluding from my standing still so long, that my intentions were pacific, lowered her head, and resumed her pluming, just in time for it to sail harmlessly over

her, and crash into a sitting guinea fowl beyond.

Well, anyone who is not deaf, and perhaps some who are, knows that at any time and under any conditions the "guinea" makes noise enough. But their notes under ordinary impulses sink into insignificence when compared with the bursts of obstreperous indignation which rattle from the throat of one when, sitting innocently on her nest, she is made the target of mischievous boys. The one in question flew from her nest, and began to run round and round in a small circle, uttering all the time such a deafening clatter that till today the cry of that bird, by comparison, seems to me dull and dispirited. The clamor brought my mother out of the house. She surveyed the circling, crying fowl for a moment: "Well, you seem to consider it quite an event to leave the nest; but you had better not carry it too far, or when you get back I might happen to swaddle you down till you couldn't move a feather." Having delivered which important mandate, she returned to the house. During the excitement Old Speck flew, cackling, from her nest, and began to canter for the distant hills. During all this time I stood concealed behind a tree, and managed to refrain from laughing audibly by stuffing a handkerchief into my mouth. The guinea at last, having apparently sung herself out, started off at a tangent from the circle she had been pacing, and has never been seen or heard of, so far as I know, since.

Although my fall was somewhat broken by the amusing scene enacted by the guinea, by the re-

proaches with which I would be able to twit Shrud, and by the callosities developed during former tumbles, still it was abrupt enough. My time was about equally divided between thinking of the guinea's disappearance, and longing for Saturday afternoon; for I now considered *my* repositories of resource exhausted, and did not try to think of another remedy for Old Speck; and besides, if I had thought of one, I now had a partner, and I would not have tried it without first consulting him. Neither were the daily chases after Old Speck pursued as persistently as formerly; I feared lest the folks might connect the guinea's absconding—the family wonder—with them. And so, with nothing to dissipate my complete leisure, how slowly the time passed! Finally, however, Saturday afternoon came, and faithful to time and place, Shrud appeared, actually bringing with him the stipulated piece of leather; though whether he really had faith in the "water cure," or whether he thought I might procure the yarn by some other means, or whether he only brought it to keep up my confidence in his advice, I cannot say.

However, he produced the leather, a pliant boot-top, and asked me to do the same by the yarn. But I told him my story instead. For a moment he seemed nonplussed, as long as ever I saw him nonplussed about anything, and then said: "Well, the extra second did it. I ought to have knowed better than to allowed it. Either the plan don't work with either more or less than just a minute; or else this watch of mine, which I have long suspected of being

more than an ordinary watch, caused it. But we hain't no time to talk about that now; the business now is to try something else. I propose gunpowder. What do you say?"

"Gunpowder!" I exclaimed in amazement.

"Yes," said he, "I have heard that a good charge of it exploded under an old hen will break the most troublesome of them; and it seems reasonable, too, though I never tried it. You see, it blows them high into the air; and when they get down they are too scared to think about settin' agin. And they are so light that the powder can't get holt on them to hurt them, so there's no earthly danger in it. And if I was you, I believe I would try it. Have you got any gunpowder?"

"No," I replied mournfully; adding, however, as an afterthought, "but we have got some dynamite;" remembering a stick that had been left from some that had been bought for blasting in a well.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Shrud. "How much is there?"

"A whole stick," I replied.

"Just enough!" he exclaimed again; "neither too much or too little. Put the whole stick under her at once, and I'll tell you how to fix it. Take all the stones out of the nest, and then put in some hay or grass, and hide the dynamite under it. Let your fuse come through a crack in the wall, *and be sure you are behind a tree when it goes off.* And say, it would be better if you could try it some day when there ain't nobody here but you. Some one, you know, might see you with the stuff, and

of course they would have to know all about it; and, ten to one, they wouldn't let you try it, not having heard of it; or, if they had heard, pretending not to believe in it, for you know how foggy old people can act sometimes."

The above is in substance the result of my second interview with Shrud. Twit him, indeed! I might as well have tried to twit a lawyer. That extra second, or rather the uses he made of it, knocked me out. I fell completely in with his scheme, and determined to try it at my earliest convenience. True, I slightly marveled why, in his second plan, as in the first, he was not for trying it immediately, as I believed I could get the dynamite without being detected. To be sure, we might have had to wait for sometime for the old hen to return to her nest, but he had come to stay long enough to make a ball, if only I had had my part of the material. But I dared not ask him about it, lest he should return some answer that would have rendered my shallow thoughtedness too obvious and painful. That extra second, adduced in defense of the failure of the first remedy, had sealed my mouth. And so, promising him to try the dynamite at my first chance, I suffered him to depart.

It was not long until an opportunity favoring this scheme literally obtruded itself upon me; indeed, on the following day, Sunday. In those days juvenile attendance at divine worship was not too closely exacted, perhaps an indulgence inherited from the early Pilgrim Fathers' love of religious freedom; indeed, even the elders were sometimes

not too severely punctual; which barbarous negligence, I am told, still holds in some parts of the world. In like manner, youths were seldom forced by their parents to attend school, the youngster's own choice usually being law in this matter; for they said that a boy, whipped off to school every morning, would learn nothing; and that anyone forced to attend church would be invariably certain to turn out a villain. Be that as it may, certain it is that I had not much trouble in obtaining a reprieve from church-going on that particular morning; indeed, if the truth must be told, securing the respite was not nearly so hard a task as restraining myself sufficiently that they should not perceive that something unusual was brewing.

The church-goes were no sooner well off, than I, with my mother's parting injunction to keep everything in order until she returned still ringing in my ears, went to the drawer and brought out the stick of dynamite. How large and terrible it looked! this domesticated, concentrated lion. I knew that if I dropped it on the ground, it was liable to explode; I, therfore, carried it very carefully, as a man does his first baby. And thus, with life in one hand and death in the other, as it were, I went out to the hen-house; and Old Speck left the nest in her usual hurried manner. As in the case of the dead snake, and live wires, I removed the stones, and put hay in place of them; under which I secreted the cylinder of Herculean conpound. I then put the cap on the fuse, and pushed the cap, with

trembling fingers, into the brown powder; after which I poked the other end of the fuse through a crack in the wall, so that it could be lighted from the out-side; and then went out to await the return of my victim.

But the old lady seemed to be exercising a good deal of leisure, or hesitancy, in returning, and I became rather weary of waiting. Finally, however, she did come, and arranged herself over the infernal machine. With every fiber in me jerking and trembling like a pair of frog's legs when they first touch the hot grease, I approached the protruding end of the fuse, and tried to strike a match on the hen-house wall. But at the sound she was off on the wing, about as quickly as was Morgan de la Fay, when the enchanted Roland failed to seize her by the forelock as she lay asleep in the gardens of Falerina, and I was left standing in about the same degree of shame and stupidity as was that hero. But there was nothing for it; I had to wait till she returned. However, before returning to the old apple-tree that stood at one corner of the hen-house, behind which I kept my look-out, and behind which I meant to retreat when I had the fuse lighted, I procured a stone, and laid it where it would be handy to scratch my match on next time. How long she remained away! During her absence, I had but one diversion, eating apples; and I had already eaten from them until only one bite from

each apple was any longer palatable,—the black, bruised spot caused by its falling from the tree. But I do not think I ever saw the time when I could not eat the bruised spot out of one more apple; and with this distraction I allayed my impatience as well as I could.

But at last she reurned, just as I had about concluded to run her down, and tie her on the nest; and cautiously as an African Dutchman stalking a lion, I crept to the rock, and drew my match across it. But alas! once more she was too wary for me. What was to be done? Should I forego the experiment? Never! There seemed but one alternative: the chase. But I dreaded to start out after her on Sunday. However, she had to be procured some way; and I was just rolling up my pantaloons for the chase, when I happened to think of another plan. As I had managed to get within reach of the fuse each time, and she had not flown until she heard the noise of the igniting match, perhaps if I could bring fire by lighting a piece of folded paper, I might get the thing ignited. At any rate, it was worth trying; and I returned to my tree, to wait a few cycles more.

By this time it must have been nearly noon; and the sun being very hot, and the shade being very cool, and the breeze being very pleasant, and my sleep of the night before having been very broken and disconnected, I lay down on my back in the grass under the old apple tree for a little rest. And then, how it ever happened to occur I do not know, but almost

before I knew it I was fast asleep. How long I slept I do not exactly know, but when I awoke the sun was half way down his evening road, and was shining full in my face. There is something decidedly unpleasant in this falling asleep in the shade and waking in the sunshine. I sat up, rubbed the sunbeams out of my eyes, and wondered who and where I was. But not for long could the drowsy fumes of slumber keep the real business of life from my brain. I knew that by this time Old Speck should be back on her nest, and without even waiting to consider whether the church-goers had returned, or anything else, I lighted my piece of folded paper and started for the fuse. And at last I succeeded in lighting it, and without even ascertaining if Old Speck were on the nest, still half under the mental depression of slumber, I dashed back to the old tree.

But stand behind it, indeed! My body may have been partly behind it, but I could no more keep my eyes off the scintillating fuse than a moth can keep out of the flame. When it smouldered my hopes sank, and when it threw out a shower of sparks they flashed up again, yet with a kind of fear attending. Now, all outside the wall is consumed, and I can see it no longed. And now a long suspense! What, does it mean to fail after all? And now a noise that sounded to me like heaven and earth coming together. Out over the placid country floated the thunderous sound and up against the distant hills, mantled in the blue haze of Indian Summer it rolled, and back and forth between themselves the opposing hills

cast its diminishing volume, until it was lost in transit. Simultaneously with hearing this I saw part of the wall nearest me burst out, flying pieces of plank filled the air, and floods of dust and smoke poured through the cracks in the part of the wall left standing, and yet I was not touched. As soon as the dust and smoke settled sufficiently for me to see the ruin I had wrought, fear came over me, and without giving it a second look I turned and ran into the house, entering by the back door just in time to look through the front windows and see the returned church-goers draw up in front of the gate.

The old dog snoozed on the front porch and the old cat snoozed on the back one, but I, oh where was I? Now I remember! Writhing under the auspices of a semi-shingle wielded by an irate mother. Oh! for the variation of even an inch in the landing of the epispastic cypress; but no such variation came. My mother understood the principle of punishment; that the smaller the space upon which any amount of chastisement could be bestowed, the more effective it would be; that in order to render the effect of the rod most opposite from that fabled to have been produced by the caduceus, let it descend each time on exactly the same spot. At first, its trifling infliction had seemed rather pleasant than otherwise; but it rapidly became serious, and it was not rendered less so by my being conscious that the key-holes—we were locked in a room alone—were alive with laughing eyes. Would she never be done! How I longed for the callosities of the baboon. It

was the longest spell of continuous torture I ever underwent; but, like all earthly things, it had to have an end, and after what seemed an age the blows ceased to rain and I was released from the rainbow posture I had been maintaining across her knee, and she passed out leaving me locked up in the room.

"Infinite wrath and infinite despair!" What could I do to end my miserable existence? On the table sat a small bottle, with a skull and crossbones stamped on the label. I seized it and wrenched out the stopper and raised it to my lips to drink. But hold! before the liquid touched my lips, the empty skull grinned a warning, too hollow and mocking even for my rage to overcome. Although my condition was despicable, although both heaven and earth were against me, did this, to be reduced to fraternity with this leering skull, promise any redress? Or rather a deepening of the evils? With trembling hands I replaced the bottle and even as I did so a strange noise became audible.

I never had heard such sounds before, and for awhile I was frightened; but as it became louder I knew from what I had been told, it to be the puffing of a traction engine. These vehicles were then being introduced for the first time in our part of the country, and I had never yet seen one; and the ambition of my life, next to that of conquering Old Speck, had been to behold one of these meandering monsters. Indeed, they were the general wonder of everybody, and here was one coming right past our house and one not able to see it! Nearer and nearer came the snorting mammoth, and I saw through the

window some of the crew attending it go out to our well for water. Fainter and fainter grew the receding sounds, and as they faded I asked myself what there was for a boy to live for anyway. Here I was, locked up in durance damnable, having just suffered a most terrible flogging, with no means of knowing how much more might be coming; and all through no fault of my own. I see no escape from the pessimism engendered by such meditations, unless it be to chronicle the happenings immediately after the explosion.

My parents, of course, wanted to know what caused it, and there was nothing for it but to tell them, which I did, omitting Shrud's share in the affair, however. My folks were not yet done surveying the wrecked hen house and calculating the damage, when people, attracted by the noise of the explosion, began to arrive to inquire its cause. From all directions they came, across fields, by roads, through woods; men, women and children. Even "Old Mother Waters" was there with her knitting in her hands. The good old lady had contracted such a habit for this art, that she was restless and impatient if she was not at it. And so Sunday and every other day, summer and winter, all day and half the night it was knit, knit, knit! And whenever she did put her work aside, her fingers mechanically kept up the movement. A terrible example of the force of habit! But perhaps the most original genius present was "Uncle Juno." He was a very aged, hairy gentleman who lived alone, and who, though I could never see anything in him but an old multi-

maniac, who had survived, or been born superior to, all kinds of usefulness, had attained to the proud distinction of neighborhood oracle. He was known as "Uncle Juno" because he was so old that everybody called him uncle, and because he continually swore by Juno, hence Uncle Juno. He had rather a queer nose I used to think, in that the partition extended down considerably lower than the sides, and on the extreme tip of it hung forever a tiny liquid droplet. I have seen, on various noses, a temporary droplet of this kind, but this one was eternal; no summer solstice was ever sufficient to evaporate it; no hyperborean blasts to congeal it, and he never molested it himself.

My father and mother met each comer very civilly, and told them the trouble and the cause of it. They all examined, wondered at and discussed it as much as they chose; they then gathered in the front yard, and my part began. My mother requested me, very gently but firmly, to tell them, as a compensation for having disturbed their sabbath and caused their walk, of my entire course with Old Speck; my incentive, remedies and incidentals. I tell them! I! A child of pride and bashfulness, too! Oh, horrors! However, there seemed to be no alternative and so, with every eye fixed upon me, I arose and stammered out some incoherencies about my contract with my mother, and the late catastrophe; and I was just going to try to slink out of sight when my mother kindly prompted me by saying: "Tell them about the episode of the string, too, son; and what came of it."

What could we all do without mothers, anyway? How could we live, die, or even be born, without them? I retold the "string episode" and what came of it. Ugh! Once more I fancied myself through, and was going to try the slinking scheme, when someone in the audience cried out: "Say, sonny, did you every try *electricity* on that fowl? If you did, and I think you did, please tell us about it." Oh, that villain showman! And how much more was known? Who would want to hear about the hypnotic pantomine, the Quixotism most nauseating for me to remember of all; who, the serpentine ruse; who, the "water cure"; and who would explain the mystery of the runaway guinea?

You may wonder that I did not join in the general facetiousness, but I assure you that I did not. I gave in my electrical experience and waited for another request. But it appeared that none else knew, or intended to mention, anything else about the affair, and for that I rendered silent but devout thanks. It should be mentioned that during it all I had not implicated Shrud. At first, to my parents, I had not told about him, because I feared to let it be known that I had been "taken in" by him; and by the time my oration came I was angry, and it is one of my peculiarities that when I am angry I can neither utter a word in my own defense or in crimination of anyone else. I can only hate and endure. Hence, so far as I know, Shrud's part in the farce has never been related. Once, and but once, during that terrible scene did I dare raise my eyes

to my mother's face; it was a miniature of the sphinx.

As soon as I had concluded, Uncle Juno, in his official capacity of oldest man and neighborhood oracle, was unanimously requested to reply; stating what was proper to be done under such circumstances. As he arose, nothing loath, I saw malice twinkle in his brow-embowered old eyes, and during his talk I had but one defense: to look fixedly out to where his battered, xylophagous old mule was making desperate inroads on the rail fence to which it was tethered; and I flatter myself that it disconcerted him slightly. I was no favorite of Uncle Juno's, and well I knew it; and he seemed to know it, too.

He began by stating—always facetious, or at least trying to be—that he was at present dogged by a double curse: a sore nose and a bad cold at the same time, and that therefore they would please excuse his low tones. He then proceeded to state that the case under consideration presented some very bad features; that the malefactor had exhibited a degree of cleverness and daring of the wrong kind for his age that he was indeed sorry to see. That he greatly feared for reformation, and that he was afraid that I was doomed to go to the "eternal bad," and that the only hope of my redemption lay in the administration of abundance of punishment, both moral and material, put on with an unsparing hand. This was the substance of the old man's remarks, soon after the delivery of which the crowd disappeared.

As you have already seen me under an example of the material chastisement, I will give you a specimen of the moral; the worst perhaps. It was that I should eat no chicken during that autumn and winter. This was the most unkindest cut of all, inspired, I always believed, by Uncle Juno's secert suggestion. But it had another phase. It was not only that I was forbidden to partake of the browned pieces of the young cockerels on all occasions, but I alone was to chase them down for the sacrifice. My mother, with grim humor, insisted that it would be dangerous for me to discontinue the chase suddenly, with the high degree of perfection to which my sprinting exercises had been brought. She therefore requested that I should outstrip every cockerel brought to the bloody block—my mother would seldom or never wring a chicken's head off; she always argued that it "made 'em dizzy!" Her chastising tactics did not fail her this time. No sleeping without nightgowns now. And during that autumn great indeed was the number of promising youngsters, the golden spurs of young roosterhood just breaking through the scales on their yellow legs, to which the companionship of the young pullets was just becoming precious, the first attempt of which at crowing would perhaps during one hour be culminating in an inarticulate gurgle, while during the next they would be flitting fantastically about over the chip yard "like a chicken with its head off," all the arteries in its neck spouting blood; the bronzed savory members of which might well have shaken the resolution of the most radical vegetarian. In

rebuttal of this enforced abstinence, I have but one consolation, and it gleams down the ever-lengthening vista of years like a solitary candle through the bars of a dungeon. It is, that during the entire peroid I never once complained to anyone of my fate, nor did I ever, and opportunities were frequently offered purposely, I believe, appropriate a piece of the delicacy surreptitiously, though I will admit the temptation came often and strongly upon me.

I cannot conclude this veracious chronicle without a glimpse at the miserable position I occupied during the coming school year. Did I get the yarn for the ball? Oh, *mene, mene, tekel upharsin!* By the time school opened, my story was known to everybody in the neighborhood, and my punishment, too; especially the non-chicken-eating phase, and it was dinned into my ears incessantly. If I chanced to go among the dinner-pails at school, some one, or more likely two or three, was sure to cry out: "Don't bother the chicken." And if anyone from an adjoining district chanced to visit our school, there would be sharp competition among the boys as to who should first tell them my story; and the comer was considered dense indeed if, when he had heard it, he did not instantly double himself up and indulge for some minutes in that species of physical exercise known as the "horse laugh." And judging by this criterion, there was in our community at that time a remarkable dearth of block-heads. The ownership of the ball, indeed! As I am an unknown scribbler, that, and the power conferred by it, was enjoyed by Shrud Skeam, with whom I had absolutely

nothing to do during the entire term, except on one occasion, when I thought to have played quits with him in some degree, and was beaten out of a good knife thereby, by following his directions of "watching the fingers." In fine, my lot during the entire winter was scarce endurable, all of which prompts me to conclude: If you have a hen that wants to sit, let her sit. And if you have not the eggs to spare, steal, buy or borrow them; and if you cannot procure eggs, set her on marbles, door knobs, anything but dynamite!

On the day following the administration of the manual punishment described in an above paragraph, Tuesday—my mother had deferred the material part of the castigation until Monday lest she should break the Sabbath—I was set at liberty. I went out to survey the ruin wrought by the explosion—I had scarce had sanity enough to do so before. The hen house was pretty badly demolished, and around lay a number of smashed, pregnant eggs of geese, chickens and ducks, in different degrees of development, and with them lay the bodies of two or three hens, apparently sitters, badly mangled, among which I had little difficulty in identifying Old Speck. Beneath the nest to which she had so tenaciously clung, was a blackened hole about one and one-half feet deep. Into this I put her mutilated remains and covered them with earth. I then cast about for something to serve as a head stone, and my eyes fell on a narrow shingle, which I recognized as the one which had the day before sounded taps on the seating capacity of my taut, tenuous pantaloons.

Procuring that, I wrote upon it with a piece of "keel," the country boy's crayon, a brief account of Old Speck, her many excellent virtues and her tragic end. Above the writing I drew a picture of a hen upon a nest, allowing a row of eggs to show outside her feathers, as far around as the laws of perspective would permit, and having ornamented this simple memorial as elaborately as my taste and means allowed, I set it in the earth beside her grave. Peace to her *ashes!*

MERELY AN INCIDENT?

Spring had come at last, and in her warm lap
Pale winter lay melting; some days had passed
Since his death-throes could shake the hoar-frost down.
The south-flown birds were coming home in troops,
Each bringing music from that mellow land;
The air was crisscrossed with their dulcet strains;
And it now wanted but the flowers' perfume,
To mingle with the feathered songsters' tunes,
And make complete the balmy days; nor long
Should that be lacking, if vingeful winter,
From's icy fortress in the frozen north,
Chafing at defeat, his frost-assassins,
(Such oft his stealthy wont) should *fail* to send,
To nip the peering plants and blight their hopes.
And thus it was, as on a model day
With my soul's choice I sat; our dear retreat
A vine-immeshed piazza; for now, alas!
The leaves, that once had formed a perfect wall,
Were gone; indeed, there nothing now remained

To prove that verdant, sun-excluding mantle
Had ever been, or e'er would come again,
Save the green buds that lined the jointed stems.
And so we sat, and babbled commonplaces,
And listened to, or rather *watched*, the birds;
For now the summer's business had begun,
And tirelessly the feathered architects
Plied feet and bills in making twig-wrought homes.
"Strange," thought I, "how *confident* and certain
Seems all, and I alone irresolute!"
And, even while this thought was in my mind,
Now (either so engrossed in her task
As not to see, or, seeing, to ignore;
So near the lady's face, that had she not
Instinctively drew back, she had been brushed)
A robin flew, a feather in her mouth.
A simple incident; but note results!
Almost before the bold bird was well by,
Before the wing-stirred air was still again,
And ere I had had time to speak a word,
As one inspired, with sparkling eyes, *she* said:
"Ha! ha! and does the bird then council us!
Who from the hours that should belong to Love
Too many take, and to long Courtship give.
Happy indeed the robin! No coy maid to woo,
And thousand other things to be considered!
But just to choose his little feathered mate,
Convenient crotch, and so to Love indeed!
Oh, that such fate were ours!" She said no more;
Abruptly as she had begun, she ceased;
And burning blushes overspread her face.

But she had said enough; the cloud had passed;
Without a word I caught her to my heart,
And there she lay, and smiled and blushed by turns.
Well, well, I now am wrinkled, old and gray,
And she, *beneath the sod*, but ne'ertheless,
As often as the robins build their nests,
Sweet memory doth not fail to bear me back,
To that one time at least, when, art layed by,
Heart spoke to heart in the old fashioned way.

A FATAL QUEST.

All his years he had followed the Quest, even from his earliest school days, and now he was bent and wrinkled and his hair was thin and gray. Often and violently had be struggled to free himself of it. And more than once he had flattered himself that he was free, but only for a time, for sooner or later, infallibly as the ghost of King Charles used to come into the learned Mr. Dick's memoirs, the tenacious spectre came back to occupy his mind. Even in this age, the cue and keynote of which is for everyone to follow whatever whim may chance to please him, without ever seeming for a moment to entertain the idea that his Creator might have intended him for some purpose slightly different, he felt that he had no moral right thus to have his time and strength consumed by anything so useless and hopeless. But what could he do to be free of it? He felt that he had tried every expedient, exerted all his will, and all in vain. But through it all he had had one excuse, one support—hope—hope utterly unfounded

on any consideration of reason, and of which he himself could give no origin. Nevertheless, it had at last grown into the most obstinate confidence—confidence which no argument could daunt, and only death could destroy.

And what was this all-engrossing Quest? I am almost ashamed to tell you; not that I fear your incredulity, for I do not; that is, if you have at all looked about and noticed the number of lives drawn out of each generation by pursuits equally chimerical and useless, but, because I blush to admit that anyone bearing the human form does, ever did, or ever shall, waste his life in such a continuous run of folly. In a word then, the magnetic Quest that had dogged the gentleman's mind almost with the persistency of a malicious ghost, from boyhood to gray hairs, was the hope of finding out, sooner or later, what was the destiny of Henry Hudson—and entertain hope in such a case! From his school boy days when he had first heard of that explorer, his son, and the seven infirm sailors, being set adrift in the bay that bears his name, the home of the white whale, he had believed that in some way or other he would finally known their ultimate fate, and this idea had dogged his mind more or less persistently ever since. He did not believe that Hudson had been lost. He believed that the elements would have refused to abet so dastardly a deed; that God would have wrought some miricle to save him. He conceived it to be the noblest case of martyrdom in the history of the world—if they were lost. Those lines in which the "Ancient Mariner" tells the "wed-

ding guest" "this soul has been alone on a wide, wide sea; so lone it was that God himself scarce seemed there to be," were the most sublime in all human imagery to him. They presented to his mind's eye Hudson, all the other eight prostrate in the bottom of the boat, standing erect like the "Ancient Mariner," drifting, drifting, over the desolate sea; above him, night and flying clouds; beneath him, the relentless deep.

Why it was that he had suffered the example of Hudson, and not some one of the other numberless fates over which the eternal secrecy of the waves has colsed, and whose bleached bones doubtless strew the ocean floor, to gain such mastery over him, he could not tell. But so it was, and he believed that some day, to him at least, his fate would be revealed. And yet he did not believe that it would be found out by any discovery of relics of the crew or boat, but by some sort of spiritual communication, and yet he was not a spiritualist, save in this particular instance. He did not, therefore, examine all the drift-wood on the shores of Hudson Bay, and even invade the waters thereof, for relics of its unfortunate namesake; nor did he travel through all nations and peoples in search of descendants of the ill-starred Nine. It would have been too much like trying to settle the question as to where Prometheus received his punishment by examining all the cliffs within the pale of contention for spike scars, or possibly a few rust-gnawn chain links.

No, he did not even tell anyone what filled his mind and absorbed his thinking powers, for while

although he had a supreme confidence in his ultimate triumph, he yet had too much *external* sense not to forsee the result of such a confession. During his youthful years, as the usual pursuits and pleasures of men failed to interest him, people thought that he was only maturing some kind of greatness, which would be kiven to the world in due time; but as time went on and still nothing on the outside attracted him, nor did anything come from within, they, for the most part of course, concluded very naturally that he had no mind, and thought no more about him. The people were, therefore, divided in their estimate concerning him; some few still had faith in him, and considred him a wrestler with deep problems, but that because he could not bring his meditations to a perfection satisfactory to himself, or from some other cause, he refused to give them to the world; but for the most part he was believed to be a mere harmless lunatic, or at least a *semi-lunatic*.

And thus affairs had dragged on, until now he was gray and wrinkled, and seemingly no nearer the solution of the great esotery of his life than when it first began to absorb his attention. But year by year his hopes had grown brighter and brighter, though why he could not have told. He tried all the great remedies recommended as certain solutions of useless troubles, and as infallible in banishing the fumes of idle speculation from the mind, and for interesting one in the affairs of life; but with indifferent success. The all-absorbing excitement of love and marriage had come nearer to

proving a specific than anything else; but he did not marry, be it written in his defense, merely as an experiment. And yet, even during the dissolving bliss of the honeymoon, when he wished and tried to appear most gay and care-free, he would occasionally be mastered by periods of pensive melancholy, which it required all his strength to throw off, and for which he was always ashamed to give the true cause. From attaining his majortiy he had been obliged to support himself, but he had made no effort to become rich, and even the humdrum routine of labor he had been obliged to perform would almost worry him to death sometimes.

And thus affairs had gone on until his wife died. It was his first great loss, and the deep, lasting sorrow caused by it was sufficient for a time to almost banish the phantom of his mind. The grief caused by the death of his wife had served to hasten the advent of age, and he had actually hailed its coming with delight, because it would give him release from care and responsibility, with nothing to do but brood, brood, brood! And was he original, eccentric, alone, in this? Of is there not rather some paramount consideration in the mind of everyone, some question of the hereafter, it may be, or the mastering of some vice, or a perpetual repentence of some youthful crime or folly? But seldom, I hopes, does it reach such magnitude as did the desire to know the fate of Hudson in this man's mind.

He had lived with his eldest son since the death of his wife, and there we find him at the beginning of our story. It was the middle winter's autumn, to

extend an obsoluete term whereby the beginning of midsummer was known as the "middle summer's spring," and outside the night was wild and merciless, though within all was warm and cosy. All the family had retired, except the Old Man, for he, with the natural insomnia of age, often remained awake, or only dozed in his chair, with some book in his hands as an excuse, the entire night, purely for the delicious pleasure of pondering, pondering, on what was, or could have been, the fate of Hudson, his son, and the seven infirm seamen; and ever within him the taper of hope was growing, even as the flame of life wasted lower. It would seem but natural that hope, after so many years of vain meditation, as the body began to die, should also die; but not so with him; his hope came from within; it was not to be realized by *outside success;* and the mind never dies. To be sure, he had read all the stories of which he could hear that turned upon the fortunes of shipwrecked sailors, and gloried in them; some of which, such as "Enoch Arden," he almost knew by heart; but of course he did not expect the solution of the problem to come from this source. If the authenticity of dreams might have been trusted, the question would long since have been settled; but alas the dream god did not always present Sir Henry and his companions as coming to the same end; therefore, his assistance had to be entirely ignored, though it could by no means be discontinued. No; Uncle Montrose, as he was familiarly called, as he sat before the crackling grate in the house of his eldest son, Henry Hudson Montrose, if you please

(though only his father ever knew why he was so named) concluded, as he had a thousand times before, that the precious revelation could be transmitted in only one of two ways: either his soul must, like that of the Hindoo magians, be disencumbered of his body, and visit some sphere where all such lost knowledge is treasured up, or else the spirit of Hudson must, being touched with his long patience and anxiety, descend to him. And he felt that the crucial moment was near.

But alas, for the disgraceful frailty of the flesh! Even as our hero sat there, with the natural wakefulness of age and such sublime thoughts combined to keep his mind active, in an instant, without even time to snatch at one of the bushes that fringe the stream's slippery banks, he slid quietly into, and was as completely submerged by the waters of Lethe as was every Henry Hudson by the billows of the bay that bears his name. Alas for the flesh, the flesh! Who can offer any apology for it? Are we not all alike shamed by it? Does it not come between us and our brightest ideals of any of the virtues, honesty, charity, and even saintly chastity, and prevent our ever attaining more than a poor smattering of any of them?

But the old gentleman's nap was attended by one occurrence, the like of which might not occur to anyone else, though he should sleep an entire lifetime; indeed, it is not recorded that even Rip Van Winkle's twenty year siesta was productive of anything like it. Just how long he had been asleep he could not of course have said, when the mys-

terious sixth sense, operating even through the folds of drowsiness, gave its subtile warning that there was someone in the room besides himself, and caused him to raise his slumber-drooped head. He had no sooner winked and rubbed the films of sleep out of his eyes, than he perceived immediately before him the most venerable and sagacious looking specimen of humanity (if humanity he were) it had ever been his fortune to meet.

The apparition's hair, gray and silvery as frost-flowers, glistened in the lamp light, and the furrows on his brow, the mysterious traceries of age and wisdom, seemed to extend into his very skull, so deep they were. His shaggy eye-brows were also gray, but his eyes, though he appeared so old, showed no trace of dimness, indeed. they gleamed and twinkled from under his jutting brows, like two red stars from under banks of gray clouds; nor did he appear to stoop, or give any other evidence of age, only his argent hair and wrinkled brow and face. In a word, he seemed an old man's wisdom, sagacity and venerable appearance, combined with a young man's strength and activity. He was dressed in some sort of archaic mantle or toga, the superfluous folds of which he carried in his left hand, while in his right he held a small cane, though he did not seem either to need or to use it in walking. But I have already taken more time in describing him than was consumed in the brief period during which he stood forth for our hero's inspection. Indeed, he no sooner perceived him to be sufficiently awake to

understand, than he began to speak, in the curt, disdainful tones of superior wisdom.

"And so," he said, in sharp, grating tones, "you are the man who has spent his life in a vain attempt to find out what became of Henry Hudson. No," he hastily continued, as he saw the other's lips preparing to form a reply, "you need not interrupt me; it is not likely that I shall require information of any kind from you, and that you may not marvel at this, hear who I am. I am the Recorder of the Worlds. It is I who keep a record of every event that happens on the face of the earth. I was from the beginning. I am older than "Old Night" itself, and I wrote the history of the worlds as they were evolved from chaos one by one. I was already too old to care for trade fiction when the Book of Dead was one of the six best sellers. And now I dwell high up in mine etherial home, with nothing to do but chronicle the events that happen on the earth as it rolls beneath me, and to preserve what is already writtten; and with no amusement, but the absurd theories that "philosophers" foist on an over-credulous public as explanations of every mooted question, but that is sufficient," he said, as if to himself, a reminiscent smile beginning to kindle in his cunning old eyes, and to spread, like pebble-ripples across the surface of a pool, over his wrinkled face.

Checking it quickly, however, he continued, turning his bright eyes full upon our hero: "My friend, do you know what a consummate ass you have made of yourself, and what an unwarrantable

failure your life has been? Why should you trouble yourself about what became of Henry Hudson? Was it because it was the most absurd question you could find? Even supposing you had solved it, who would have been benefited thereby? What do you suppose that even Hudson himself would give to have the world acquainted with his destiny? Do you know that in this age men waste their lives in vainly trying to rake from the dust of antiquity trifles which even I have forgotten, and with which I could become familiar only by reading my account of them? There are already more facts, priceless and proven, than one can master in a lifetime. What then can be one's apology for following some absurd quest, the result of which, at the best, can only be to pile up mountains of theory and conjecture on the already measureless heap? And did you know that you were placed here by your Creator for certain great universal purposes, and that to deviate from these, to follow any little, trivial, absurd, puerile whim that may happen to suit *you,* is to invite his devine displeasure? But it is useless to lecture you, your life is already wasted, and it only remains that you shall hear and suffer your punishment; not from me, to be sure, but from the Devine Intelligence that I serve, and whose mandates determine that a wasted life shall also be a tormented one. This is your reward:

As often as you sleep, be that as often as it may, there shall pass before your eyes, in the guise of visions, seven tableaux, one for each infirm seaman; any one of the last six of which might have

been, and one of which *was,* the destiny of Hudson and his companions. But this curse shall dog the seeming blessing: As the visions form and fade before your eyes, you will be able to distinguish the genuine one; but only while it is *enduring* can you know it, for as soon as it has passed, and another has come, its identity will also pass; and, when you awake, no effort on your part will be sufficient to recall it. Thus, for one little moment, often as you sleep, shall you be conscious of the destiny of Hendric Hudson; but that bright moment will be succeeded by hours of toil and anguish in trying to recover it. You shall have your first vision even during your present sleep, for you are asleep, however wide awake you may think yourself." Having said which, as if it completed his errand, the young-old Recorder turned abruptly and suddenly vanished.

But he did not carry his recent prophecy with him, for that began immediately to come to pass; and this was the manner of it: Facile and perfect as the magic of Arbaces of old, the weird Egyptian of the Burning Belt, there passed before our hero's eyes, the seven-fold vision. In the first was represented the dereliction of Hudson, his son, and the seven sailors; and the observer was constrained to summon every ounce of heroic stuff in him in order to restrain himself at the sight. In the second, the nine *miserables* appeared drifting slowly along in their boat; but suddenly a fierce tempest swooped, like a bird of prey, upon the placid bosom of the deep, and in an instant the quiet waters, which, for

all the *ferae naturae* ascribed to them by man, without the incitement of the wind or tide, would scarce overturn a nutshell, were lashed quickly into destructive fury, and the frail craft of the nine was swallowed up by the tortured waves.

In the third, a white bear, undisputed monarch of the frozen septentrion—showing they had drifted somewhere in the neighborhood of land—made desperate by the ill-yielding of the icy north, boldly boarded their boat and found easy victims in the want-weakened inmates.

In the fourth, the abandoned men were represented as, crazed by hunger, falling upon and destroying each other. Horrible spectacle! Let us hope it was only a vision.

The fifth showed their craft shattered against the ice-sheathed rocks, on the shore, and the men, too weak and helpless from cold and hunger to withstand the shock of the icy water, as perishing in sight of safety.

But in the sixth they were represented as being more fortunate; for this time every one of them managed to land, and welcoming natives came down to meet them.

But the seventh and last view was the most beautiful, and accorded exactly, unreasonable as it was, with our hero's chief preconceived idea as to what became of Hudson. It showed the nine men drifting along under the cheerless northern skies, when suddenly the breaking heavens seemed to open, a forerunning light showed over the miserable occupants of the boat, and an angel, touched with their

sufferings, descended and bore them all bodily aloft. And at this view the old man awoke. He had a distinct rememberance of having been conscious, as it was being revealed, of the genuine destiny, but he could not for his life recall it.

And this was the result of his life-long meditation! At first he thought for awhile that it had all been but a strong dream, and that it would pass away with time. It was sometime before he could sleep again, badly as he wished to; and when he did, the same visions came again, with the same result. He now began to fear, and to believe, that he had had a real vision from Providence, but he said nothing to anyone. His friends, however, could not fail to remark that he arose each succeeding morning looking more and more haggard and forlorn, but ascribed it all to the coming on of years. The old man wondered if his punishment would end with his life, or be carried into the world beyond; and he trembled at the apprehension, for he felt that he must soon enter that other world.

But at last he decided that this state of affairs could last no longer; he *would* find out what became of Hudson. The horrible suspense was rapidly draining the vials of his aged strength. The next time he slept, he *would* settle it. He would either awake, or he would *clinch* or *follow* the real destiny somehow. Firmly settled in this determination he fell asleep, and that night, as the train of visions trooped before him, and the *real* one came to be shown, with his whole soul and strength enlisted

in the cause, he did *follow* it; and on the following morning he was found dead in bed. He had found out at last the ultimate destiny of Sir Hendric Hudson, he the penalty what it may!

THE LAND OF MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN.

As one who, near the latter end of life,
Benetted round with sin's foul labyrinth,
In the brief intervals 'tween endless crimes,
Upon his backward path turns mem'ry's light;
I think he cannot choose but muse upon
One special scene, the pivot of his life,
When for his soul the adverse angels strove;
And, as remorse chokes reminiscence down,
He cannot choose, methinks, but dwell upon
How slight *then* victory semed, and by what odds,
So fairly balanced in the morn of life
The principles of good and evil are!

E'en so, when grey hairs claim their prey in one,
Who all his life hath trod fair virtue's way;
And reminiscence casts her backward gleam,
On the soul's path, he cannot choose but start
To recall one scene, the turning point of life;
And for how long he sat in dreamy thought,
Trifling and not worth count, did evil win:

Scarce wakeful, which path to choose; while angels
Within him for the soul's allegience strove;
And at the pleasant strife he merely smiled;
And onward passed, scarce asking which had won.
But now with trembling he reviews the scene,
And quaking dread draws o'er it memory's veil,
And will not suffer him to follow out,
Even in fancy, the dark, dreadful roads
That from that scene lead into sin's domains.

And thus may neither *now* dare think upon
The paths, from life's most crucial turning point
(Though at the time it seemed but pleasant sport)
That lead into the Land of Might-Have-Been;
One, from remorse; the other, fear and dread.

THE SECOND DELUGE.

The mountain climber lay in the bed of the peasant, whose cottage stood at the base of the inaccessible mount. With the coming of tomorrow's dawn, the contest would begin. To be sure, the lofty cairn had never been scaled, but the mountain-subduer who now came to measure prowess with it had not yet been repulsed, either. Which would win? As the climber lay in the peasant's bed, the walls of the cot failed to shut out the view of the invincible peak, but it was still plainly visible to the closed eyes of the cimber, just as he had seen it a few hours before, the last rays of the sinking sun shining on its everlasting snows.

And as the man lay there, having in fancy already passed all the perils and hardships of the ascent, he imagined himself standing on the top of the impregnable column; and, even in anticipation, his old, old feeling of awed admiration, almost religion, came once more upon him, and the man was surprised. For he had left, long, long years

ago, on the first two or three summits he had gained, all such feelings as these, as useless, incumbering luggage, unfit for a mountain climber. And now, the only movement of which his soul was conscious, as he stood for the first time on some cloud-piercing summit, was one of grim, sullen triumph, almost hatred. Yes, he had almost come to consider the mountains the natural enemies of man, which he was born to subdue. And now, as he lay in the peasant's bed, on the dawn of the occasion that was either to give him a greater triumph than he had yet known, or else his first defeat, he was surprised to have the old boyish nonsense, after so many years, come so plainly upon him. The thing amused him, too, and without trying to account for it, he dismissed it lightly, and fell asleep.

The following morning, as the false dawn was coming slowly down the mountain side, and the mist rising out of the valleys, found the climber ready for the struggle. He had already become so familiar with the surroundings as to need no guide, and besides he had always climbed alone, and alone he thought to have climbed this time, but did not. For just as he was coming to his first difficult place, and had paused for a moment to study how to get over it, he began to hear a roaring noise, as if a young earthquake were coming out of the mountain side. He looked in the direction whence the sound seemed to come, and saw, what he had not noticed before, a large cave in the rocks. But in the name of sense, what is that now coming from the cavern's door? Our hero's nerves were of the

best, but he was not used to such sights. It was a muscular giant, of such proportions as even fable never reached. The climber turned to flee down the mountain side, but realized that it would be useless. Meanwhile the hairy colossus advanced, smiling, and said:

"And so you hope to climb the mountain, my son?"

At the voice, which was not so terrible as the giant's appearance, the climber turned. He had been frightened at first, but long years of standing face to face with death, and gazing the monster down, had made his nerves too much like iron for him to tremble long at anything, and so he calmly replied:

Hope! No, I hope nothing; if I can climb this mountain, I shall do so; if I cannot, I shall fail; and no hope about it."

"You speak boldly and like a master," the giant replied. "But many and bold are the hearts that have quailed before the Matterhorn. However, it shall now for awhile be my role to speak, and yours to listen."

The climber saw nothing for it but to comply with his new gigantic companion's request, though he inly chafed at the delay; so he seated himself on a mossy stone, while the mammoth continued:

"I am the Energy of the Universe. My name is also Power. I am both the Strength and the Force that bound Prometheus to the rock. Polyphemus was but a first faint conception of me. I am the servant of the Devine Intelligence that governs the universe. He points out, and I perform. It is I

that keep the planets spinning around the sun; and it was I that moulded them out of the rubbish of space. When black clouds obscure the heavens, it is but another form of me; the thunder is my voice, and the lightening the flash of my eye. I am the motor of the tornado and the hurricane, and it is I that roll the billows and tides across the ocean. I piled up this mountain, and all others, with a single stroke of my hand; scooping thereby basins for the seas. I was from the beginning; and at the last, when the scheme of the universe is exhausted, I shall gather up the fragments of wornout worlds, and hurl them into oblivion.

"I came here to this mountain on purpose to meet you; I admire your courage and endurance, though your motives are bad. Why, indeed, should you wish to scale every mountain on the earth, thereby leaving God no resting place on his world, no spot undesecrated by the human presence? Fame, idle fame, is all your quest. All the feelings of awe and veneration, that attended your youthful triumphs, the only consideration that could form any possible apology for your conduct, have passed away, and grim, stern determination alone guides you now."

The climber started as he heard his real feelings thus plainly exposed. However, there seemed to be nothing to do but listen, and the giant, apparently not noticing the effect his remarks were producing, continued:

"What is the object of mountain conquering, anyway? Who is benefited by it? How much of it

would be required to dry one poor unfortunate's tear, or to still one orphan's cry? In what does the dividend yielded by the amount of energy, life and money annually invested in mountain subjugation consist? I will tell you. It is that some ambitious scaler, from some peak's summit, may be the first to sniff the thin air, untainted by human nostril. For have not parties been known, when upon the very brink of some perilous victory, at finding someone else ahead of them, to turn abruptly about and descend? And even if you do stand, the first mortal, on some difficult summit, can you be certain that you are really the *first?* How can you know but that ages ago, cycles before the first page of history was written, and before the first story of tradition had started on its course, men, inspired by whims equally foolish with yours, stood exactly on the spot you toil so hard to gain?

"But perhaps you would say that the object of you and your kind is to leave no spot of earth untrodden by mortal feet. So be it. But are you sure that God intended every inch of his world for man's usurpation; and that He did not intend remote, desolate, barren places, unprofaned by the human presence, as His own throne, from which He could survey the doing of men? Indeed, can you be positive that man's dominion does not already grasp places never intended for him? In witness whereof, earthquakes shake down his homes, volcanoes submerge him, and tidal waves sweep him away. But even if I were to convince you that this is the case, probably you would find fault with the

management of the world, and say that you could do it better yourself. Possibly often, in former days, the summer's dry parched vegetation has prompted you to exclaim, that with half the clouds that lie tumbled about the sky, incumbering it like so much useless rubbish, you could furnish a sufficiency of rain. If you have ever had such thoughts, turn your eyes upon the moon, while I tell you a story."

The climber surveyed the sky for Luna, and there she was, almost on the meridian, scarcely yet reduced to faintest dimness by the light of dawn; and he kept his eyes turned towards it while the giant continued:

"That moon was once the scene of an experiment, the most unique in the history of the worlds. It was a scheme, planned and executed by the Almighty, to ascertain if any amount of wealth and luxury could curb the avarice of man, and the decision was that it could not. The mould of the moon was once the richest and most fertile of all the worlds, and for this reason was chosen as the scene of this experiment. The Creator determined to plant a colony on the moon; every wealth-gaining scheme of whom should be most superbly responded to by the wealth-yielding elements of the sphere on which they were placed. The larger the acreage indulged in by the covetous husbandman, the more prolifically did the soil respond to his hopes; such was the devine commands implanted within it. And no weeds or tares grew to choke out the laborer's prospects. It was thought by the devine Projector

that man, as soon as he saw that want could never reach him, would lose his lust of acquiring and hoarding wealth, the same being so easily produced, and would settle down to a life of leisure and economy. In a word, that He would make riches so common that they would lose their attraction. But all in vain. The more he amassed, the more he wanted to amass, and the more freely the earth rendered them, the more rapidly were its riches exhausted. Lives of luxury they certainly did live, but economy they never learned; and wastefulness and extravagance among themselves was the only kind of charity they ever indulged in.

"Well, affairs continued thus for awhile, but at last every atom of fertility, and even the atmosphere, was utterly exhausted; and the descendants of the men who were started out under apparently the most auspicious conditions, actually died of starvation. And so the plan failed, and it was learned thereby that, for any world to support the number of people it is destined to support, and to endure as long as its materials and force are capable of lasting, man must be made to wrest his wealth from the strong-box of nature, as it were. And if you should ever begin to think that the world was built for you alone, or even for your age and generation, let the pale face of the desolate, barren moon, as it floats nightly through the sky, be a constant rebuke to you. And if you should happen to survive this day's happenings, remember the story I have told you, for it is a true one, and never afterwards pray for rain.

"However, my present object with you is not to preach reformation, you are probably too hardened in your ways for any amount of it to do you any good; but to tell you the only means whereby this mount can be ascended. In a word, it is by a *second deluge;* another flood, which, like the first, shall destroy every living thing on the face of the earth. Are you willing to subscribe to this universal sacrifice that you may be the first to stand on the top of this peak? To be sure, there are ways whereby I could elevate you to the summit without any loss of life whatever; but the Devine Intelligence under which I labor has willed that only this plan shall be submitted to you. You cannot climb the mountain by yourself. The attempt would result in your first failure. This will be the manner of the ascent, if you embrace my offer. The skies will become overcast, rain will begin to pour down, as in the days of old, but only one day, instead of forty, will be consumed in the flood; you will find a canoe before you, into which you will get, and the prow of it will rasp the mountain side, as the water rises higher and higher, until at last you will be able to step out upon the long-wished-for summit. But one condition is enjoined: You alone must occupy the canoe. You will be provided with a weapon, and every living thing, both men and animals, driven to the mountains by the flood, and who, frightened into frenzy, attempt to board your "ark," you must ruthlessly slay. For if you suffer but a living thing to occupy the canoe with you, it will no longer stem the waters, but sink, and your own destruction will be

added to the world's second wreck. You know the conditions; do you agree?"

For one little moment, the first he had ever experienced that he could remember, the climber stood undecided. Then he raised his eyes to the bold, barren summit, over which the eagles had never flown; the old iron determination came into his blood, and he said sternly:

"I am agreed."

But one extenuating fact can be offered in defense of the climber's decision: he believed all the giant had said about the flood to be merely a story told to test his courage and determination, and that he would be elevated to the longed-for summit by some less destructive means.

So quickly that the climber could not tell whither, the giant vanished, and immediately the skies began to become overcast. It looked as if the entire firmament had been rolled up into one black mass of night, in which every vestage of the dawn was lost. Lurid lightning streamed along its under side, but seemed unable to pierce the ebon mass; while from cloud to cloud rolled the breaking thunder. And then the torrents of rain began to descend; but strange to say, not even a single drop fell upon the climber. All around, as far as he could see, which was not far, seemed to be a falling mass of solid water; yet he remained dry. And soon he perceived the canoe, and climbed into it; not that there was any need of it just yet, but because our invincible Climber, for the first time in his life, was becoming rather tremulous around the regions of

the heart. He now began to believe that what the giant had said about the flood was not invention, and to repent of his rash decision.

Lying in the bottom of the canoe was the stipulated weapon. He stooped and picked it up. It was a shining battle-axe, of antique pattern, with an edge keen as that of a razor. Leaning on this weapon, a new-awakened fear beginning to throb and flutter about his heart, the Climber waited. But not for long did his suspense endure. The fast-rising water was already under the stern of his boat; in another moment he would be afloat, that is, if the skiff would support him. In another instant, almost with a rush, the water lifted his frail craft entirely off the ground, and it supported him. But no sooner was he afloat, than troubles of another sort began; the crowds of men and women, and swarms of animals, both wild and tame, and of all kinds, driven up the mountain side by the rising flood, began to assail him. Oh! it was a terrible time! The climber had to wield his battle-axe with all his strength and skill to keep the frenzied rout from boarding his skiff.

While he was slaying the men and animals, the birds of the air would alight on him, and he had to guard at once a thousand places. When the fear-frenzied men and women would grasp his canoe with one hand, he would lop off that; when they grasped it with the other, he would lop that off; whereupon, they would grasp it with their teeth, and he would then lop off their heads; and that was the only way he could get free of them. Even above

the noise of the storm arose the screams of women, and many a mother approached him, her babe held aloft in her arms, and begged him to save only it and she would perish gladly; and he, crazed by the base love of life would dash out the infant's brains. More than once, however, the determination seized him to be no more a perpetrator of such deeds, but to leap headlong into the flood, and perish with the perishing; but always the base love of life prevailed. And why, indeed, did it? For many years he had been accustomed to regard death as a constant companion, into whose embrace he was likely at any moment to sink, and from whom, even in his most contiguous interviews, he had never been known to shrink; and why now, with the hope of ultimate safety at least but very slender, and a barren, desolate, uninhabited world to return to, if he were saved, did he commit such crimes for the base preservation of life? Ah! It was the unparalleled sin he was conscious of having committed that unnerved him and made him shrink from meeting fate, even though every minute of the delay heaped more crimes upon his soul. What! consign a world to destruction that one man might stand for a few minutes upon a mountain top! But the worst was not yet.

As the direful conflict went on swiftly up the mountain side, the assistance of the water, and their fright, making mountain climbing easy, hands now weak and feeble, were thrown over the side of his skiff, with which came faces that, even in the half light, he could distinguish, friends of his youth, now

long since forgotten, but in that brief, terrible moment, as his axe was descending on their heads, they burned their images indelibly into his soul. At last came his infirm old father, and he, alas! must meet the common fate. And now the sad, kind face of his wrinkled mother, to whom long since his way of life had caused a thousand deaths, peered up beseechingly into his, rendered doubly ghastly by a sullen gleam of lightning that struggled for a moment with the growing darkness that hung over the water. And now, oh horror! the same agency disclosed the mute, piteous look of the sweetheart of his better days, whom he had promised to marry after he had climbed a few more mountains.

But I forbear to dwell on such horrible details. Suffice it, that the slaughter continued to the very summit of the mountain; the assistance of the water and their wild fright making mountain climbers of everyone. At last the very summit stone was reached, and the Climber, after a moment's hesitation, stepped out of his canoe onto it, for he feared not to; and the skill was no sooner left undefended, than a thousand hands and paws and talons dragged it beneath the waves. And so at last the Climber stood upon the summit he had given a world to gain! But where, alas, was the glory? It was neither more nor less than a bare stone, jutting two or three feet above the world of water, exactly such as mariners dread and try to shun. And it was with difficulty that the Climber kept his footing upon it.

And now the downfall of rain ceased, it having fulfilled its mission; but the horrors of the flood in

no wise abated. Several times limp hands were thrown about the Climber's rock of refuge, but the owners were too enfeebled to draw themselves out of the cold water. His chief cause for alarm was now given by the birds that were flying in swarms about him, and he had to ply his axe in unabated vigor to keep from being driven into the water by them. The darkness now became pitchy, unrelieved by any levin flash, and the Climber wondered if it were nightfall and if he had spent an entire day in slaughter, and he marvelled at how quickly the time had passed, if night it were; it had scarcely seemed like an hour to him. Oh! but it was a night of horrors! It was indeed a veritable flood, and whales sported once more among the craigs, but their bellowing and plunging showed that they also must perish. Everything left alive was frightened; even the undaunted heart of the eagle was filled with terror, and his screams of freight echoed over the dark waters. The now well-nigh frenzied climber fancied that he could see the monsters of the deep rearing and struggling in the universal ocean around him. He no longer heard the sounds of human distress, which left him to infer that the race of men had perished —perished that one man might stand on a slippery rock in the midst of universal destruction! Constantly, flocks of birds, their tired wings no longer able to support them, fell in the water, and their useless flapping and battling with the elements resounded from every side.

And now, as the exertion necessary to maintain his station decreased, and gave him a little leisure,

the Climber began to wonder what was to be his own fate. How could he get down from his summit; and if he did get down, how could he live alone in the world? With a great sickness at his heart, he remembered that he had made no bargain with the giant for his safe descent. Even if the waters were to subside, he did not believe that he could descend safely, and even this desperate chance the dark element showed no symptoms of granting. Unquestionably, he also should perish; it was unreasonable to think otherwise—to think that he, who had sacrificed the entire world for a mere whim, should escape unscathed! And his poor semblance of security was only to draw his fate out and make it the more terrible. Doubtless, he should crown the reign of destruction and perish last; turn giddy from want of food and rest, and tumble from his miserable perch into the all-devouring water. This prospect so filled the poor climber with consternation, that he relaxed his grip on the helve of his battleaxe, and that blood-stained retainer slid noiselessly down the mountain side. He stooped, and tried in vain to recover his weapon, lost his balance and came near falling off the rock; and just as he got straight once more, now full of terror, all his person tremulous as a grey-hound's flank on a cold day, he was conscious of an arm benig thrown around his neck, and of someone on the rock beside him.. With chattering teeth, he turned towards the newcomer and managed to articulate, "who are you?"

The other laughed a derisive, diabolic laugh, and said:

"Who am I! Well, but this is flattering! To meet one who has been a follower of mine for so long, and him not to know me! Oh! but I forgot the darkness, and that it obscures objects to mortal eyes. That excuses you. Well, then, I am his Satanic Majesty, Beelzebub, Infernal Monarch of the lower world. And I have been about collecting my followers, and seeing that none of them forsake me in the last hour, as so many of them have done; and I have flown until my wings will no longer bear me. But who are you? Oh, now I remember! You are the mortal for whose whim this mighty coil was stirred up. But how does it happen that you alone are safe, while so many millions have perished? Oh, now I remember again; it was that you might stand on the top of this very mount that the flood was sent. But do you expect to carry it thus and escape? No; though to no one else, you owe me a death, for robbing me of a world so prolific in breeding followers of my standard. Into the water with you!"

And he tightened his grasp on the poor Climber and tried to hurl him into the black flood. But the man had not spent years in muscle building mountain climbing for nothing. The prospect of death, after all his crimes, lent him fourfold strength, and he strove with the "arch enemy" right valiantly. The Climber and the Devil struggling for the one bit of unsubmerged earth, death, or a drenched immortality, the issue! Indeed, so violently did

the man struggle that it caused him to awake. It required some moments for the fumes of the dream to get sufficiently out of his mind for him to understand that it was raining outside, and that the peasant's roof was none too impervious. Nevertheless, on the following day the Climber departed without even trying to scale the mountain.

ADDRESS TO LUNA.

I love thee, Moon, I love thy gentle face;
And never once in life, as mem'ry serves,
Have I gazed on thee with a breast unmoved,
Since first the shapes of beauty met my eyes,
And swept the chords of feeling in my soul.
And I have watched thee, Moon, as thou hast come
From out thy silent sea of somber pines,
Or rosest dripping from the briny wave,
Or burst from out the bosom of the plain,
Or when thy pale, pure radiance hath been quenched
At thy meridian by the rosy dawn,
Or sunk behind the Occident's dim pale,
Bathed in seas of thine own crimson light;
And still my breast an heightened feeling owned.
What is thy mission, Moon, besides to *light?*
What's the effect, as from on high thou pourest
Thy flood of liquid silver o'er the earth?
Thou art the mistress of all peace and love;
All lovers swear their vows by thy sweet face,
All treaties should be signed in thy pale light.

And what deep mystery dost thou still present,
Of what and whence thou art, as nightly still
Serene thou scalest heaven's azure arch!
Let others think as think they must, to me
Thou art the embers of a burned-out world,
A vast earth-tomb, one mighty sepluchre!
The scars upon thy face are but the trace
Of the fierce race of life that once was there.

And what poet ever yet hath wetted pen,
However quick Fame oped her arms to him,
However rushed the grand themes on his mind,
But he hath loved thee, and sometime in life
His Ode to Luna hath found time to write?

I will not now the legends dear recall
That round thee cling; dreamed in the days of old,
When thy pure, precious, streaming silver fire
With loftiest imagination touched
The Poet's soul. In fancy's realm they glow,
A priceless heirloom of the past and thee,
Since men no more such lovely tales conceive.

And thou wilt take *my* simple praise, oh Moon.
Honest though plain; nor truer had it been
Though I had deeper delved, and on thee heaped
The learned imagery of a thousand years.

And other worlds, they say, have other moons;
Jupiter, seven; belted Saturn, eight;
Mars, two; and far Uranus, six; and these
Of various hues ofttimes, designed to spread
The rainbow's lovely mantle o'er the earth,
And in fantastic spangles dye the night:
But I will wager my poetic skill,
There's not thy like in all the throng of them.

Shine on, thou mottle-faced Queen, shine on!
And thou wilt shine, at least the Muse thinks so,
Till earth hath met her doom in "fervent heat,"
And drifts a blackened, blasted wreck through space;
Thou still wilt keep thy place, and thy pale rays
Will light the debris of a ruined world;
And thou wilt keep thy place till it and thee
By the Omnipotent's breath are puffed away,
And into nothingness swept.

THE STRANGE CASE OF SOLOMAN TRUDGE.

How do you suppose that modern readers, for whose delight writers are fathoming every corner of the known world, in search of the marvelous and unusual, would like a brief, true narrative from the acamedy of Lagado? So far as I know, not an item of news has come from that far-away country since Lemuel Gulliver published his short, prejudiced, erroneous account of it. But I must not be too severe in my denunciation of Gulliver's hurried synopsis of the most wonderful country under the sun—though it is in truth but little more than an ignorant criticism of things beyond the rude, malicious tar's capacity—for his account is what first caused me to set out to ascertain if such marvels really existed, or if the whole fabric were merely a sailor's tale.

With this end in view, I set out at about twenty years of age—I was older when I first read Gulliver than most boys are—and I have never regretted a single step taken for that purpose. I applied to the captains of several different ships for transporta-

tion to that Land of Marvels; but, while all of them had heard of or seen the shores of Balnibarbi, each one declared that it was the most hermit nation of the world, that it had absolutely no intercourse with any other country so far as they could ascertain, and that when some aerial architect had contrived a flying machine capable of coping with Laputa, it would be comparatively safe to anchor in her harbors, but not sooner. At last, however, I prevailed on one, assisted by a good purse of money, to put me in a small boat, as near as he durst approach to the forbidden shores; and this was done.

I was no sooner near enough to distinguish the expressions on the faces of the ranks of people on the shore, drawn thither by the approach of the ship, than I knew the whole account by Gulliver to be a mere fabrication; for I could discern not one welcoming face among them all. Laputa descend to take up a way-faring stranger indeed! It would be more likely to come down to crush him into the earth. And now it may be my courage began to fail me. I looked around for the ship that had borne me thither, but it was already so far away as to make pursuit out of the questoin. My dilemma bore the usual two horns: Those frowning people, of whose language I only knew the few words found in Gulliver, and the open sea. I chose the former. You may be sure the people were amazed to hear a stranger using some of the words of their language, though part of them were obsolete. They thought at first that I was one of that kingdom, who had been deported many years before, and was now wan-

dering back. At this thought their grim looks began to relax, though no one knew me. But I knew that it would not do to let the delusion survive. I told them, as soon as I had sufficient command of the language, how I came by the words, and that I had come to their country to verify or disprove Gulliver's account of it.

Well, it is an historic fact among them that a certain stranger did reside in that country for awhile, about one hundred and fifty years before my coming, and that he suddenly disappeared; no one knows how or whither, for while it is a law of their country that no alien shall come into it, they also have a no less stringent law, that, should one come, he shall never leave it. But their historians also record that this same stranger, during all his residence in that country, lived at the cheap taverns, performing the simplest kinds of labor for his living, and was never any more in the academy of Lagado, or on Laputa, than was the most obscure peasant in the kingdom.

I was slightly daunted by this recital of the poor figure my beloved Gulliver had cut among these isolated hermits, and was also grieved to have to depose him from the position he had held for so long in my mind as a pattern of the absolutely veracious traveler. Yea, I came to know that one cannot take every story for the truth, even though the narrator himself tells you that it *is* the truth. Nevertheless, though Gulliver, the only other stranger ever known in the kingdom, had failed to gain an entrance into either the academy or the flying island—he probably

got his knowledge of the former by bribing some discharged professor, and of the latter by taking the same course with some lord that had fallen from favor, for the versimilitude of his account is too great for it to be pure imagination, and the law is most strict, and the punishment, death, concerning the secrecy the people are to maintain towards every stranger, if such should chance to come, as to the wonders contained in these two places—I determined not to despond. As I was armed with no diplomatic credentials, the only thing of which I knew that could possibly have proven a passport to one of my station to Laputa, even if *it* could, I turned my attention to the academy. And, be it spoken without pride or boasting, after many years of patience, disappointment and rebuke, I actually won my way to the very core of its mysteries; first, as a student, and later as an instructor.

And I *could* write volumes of the wonderful place, that would be richer in marvels than the Arabian Nights, but with this difference: My story would be true. But, alas! this can never be. Every stage of my advancement into the academy of Lagado is covered by an oath of secrecy; not made with any mental reservation; and I cannot be perjured merely to be famous. And what real honor would it be to me, anyway? What honor is it to any man merely to tell what other men have done? Anyway, I shall not break my oath for such honor. Hence, all I can offer the world as the result of my many years' sojourn in that land of marvels, Balnibarbi, is a short account of a certain fat, drowsy student,

and what came of his failure to obey the instructions in a certain instance; and this, as I take it, will not violate a single one of my many oaths of secrecy.

But before I begin, a few words of explanation may not be amiss, and also of self-defense. The misfortune then that happened to the fat, drowsy boy could only have occurred in some place where knowledge is administered in the manner there employed. An ill-natured, antagonistic, half-wrong account of this method, the universal one there of instilling wisdom into the empty polls of youth, and which I must admit is far ahead of any of the schemes of any of the most advanced instructors of our own country, may be found in the last paragraph of the first chapter of the treatise on the academy by Gulliver. Now, as this is already in print, and likely always to be, I cannot, in spite of my oaths, refrain from correcting its errors. Nor is Gulliver to be exculpated on the score of advancement having been made since he visited the kingdom; for as the academy is now, so was it then, and has been for above five hundred years past. Indeed, it has long been perfect, and can go no further. Its method of inculcating knowledge is, as Gulliver says, by means of a sapient wafer; but whereas he limits this plan to the infusion of mathematical knowledge, it is in reality employed in imparting all kinds of learning. Indeed, it is the only method used, or allowed to be used, in the academy, for none other conceivable could equal it in efficiency.

But one condition is connected with it of which Gulliver's informant failed to tell him. It is this:

The candidate for the flowers of wisdom is obliged, immediately after swallowing the wafer, to stand for half an hour on his head, or at least to remain by some means in a topsy-turvy position; because, unless this is done, as the circulation distributes the essence of the dissolving wafer, all the other organs in the body would receive as much of it as would the brain, the one for which it is of course intended; and the professors dare not fancy the result of such a condition. But if an inverted posture is assumed, the contents of the wafer, charged with the gravity of wisdom, sink into the organ for which they were intended, and no more maleffect is observed among the students than if they had acquired their learning turning over ponderous tomes by the light of a midnight candle; indeed, not nearly so much, for hollow eyes and pale cheeks in students is unknown among these people; it is only the instructors who look worn out and forlorn.

Now, I know that the above paragraph might be construed by some malicious, flaw-seeking critic as an infringement of my oath. Well, what if it is? Does not the aim justify it? Is it not better that I should give the true account of this thing, than that the crude sailor's crazy, ill-natured condemnation should continue to heap fuel on the world's prejudice against these people? Anyhow, I shall venture it, and, as Shylock says, "the sin be on my head." Besides I have not betrayed a single one of the golden secrets they guard so sedulously from the world. I have not given the formula of the sapient wafer, though I *could;* and yet, my true object in saying

what I have said, is to put the world's appetite on edge for a more intimate knowledge of the wonderful advancement of these people. And from this, old as I am, I hope to see their methods and progress enjoyed by all the peoples of the world. For what moral right has any man or nation to the exclusive use of one of God's hidden blessings, just because he happens to be the first to find it? Would not the broader and better policy be to apply it as quickly as possibly to the benefit of all God's creatures? And not, as is almost always done, take every precaution that its value shall tend only to the aggrandizement of the discoverer or inventor? But this digression grows to tediousness; I must go on with my story or else leave it untold.

Well, then, it so happened that during my tutorship in the sapient seat of Lagado, one Soloman Trudge, the fat, drowsy boy already mentioned, came to the academy for instruction. He was indeed the most saturnine, phlegmatic individual I ever saw. The two pale blue slits of sleepiness that showed between the two pairs of his eyelids were scarce a quarter of an inch in width. And when he spoke, which was only on the cue of obvious necessity, an ordinarily quick-tongued person could have interposed a considerable oration between each of his syllables; and a thought had never any more passed through his adipose brain than a sunbeam has through a cesspool. After a hasty consultation the professors decided to administer first a Freethought wafer, concluding that if anything could cause him to think, it would be to dazzle him with the so-called freedom

of thought. The wafer, therefore, upon which was written the essence of a most cogent atheistic treatise, was administered, and the corpulent candidate for the flowers of Mercury was told to stand for half an hour on his head in a certain corner. But this inverted posture the fat student found himself, on trial, unable to attain. So three of the fragile instructors helped him to assume the topsy-turvy, and judging from the limited activity of the turtle, the animal with which one most spontaneously compared the fat boy—and which, when on its back, cannot get on its feet, and when on its belly, cannot get on its back—that he would be unable to get on his feet again without aid, they went about their tasks, leaving the fat boy to struggle with the dissolving bomb of scepticism as best he could.

But alas, for the fallibility of human calculation, even when made by the learned professors of Lagado. When the instructors returned, at the end of the stipulated time, they found the fat boy sleeping, "all of a heap." Pandora's box is open! As the frightened professors looked aghast at each other, the drowsy cause of their alarm, utterly unconscious of the Damoclean sword hanging over him, slept on. And now behold the craftiness of human nature, which even learning cannot eradicate. After a hasty consultation, the professors, with an infinity of calling and pulling, awoke the sleeping boy, told him that if he could do no better than *that*, they could learn him nothing, and started him back to his parents. But being interested in the result of the mistake, we did not fail to keep an eye

on the unfortunate boy; and this was the result of our unpardonable blunder:

In a few days strange phenomena began to be manifest in the fat boy. Any of his bodily organs was liable at any time, without a moment's warning, to discontinue performing its function; and no amount of physic seemed to have the slightest effect on it. Of course we were sorry for the poor boy, but we dared not mention what we know about it—and the boy's own fat mind was too sluggish even to dream of the real cause of his trouble; indeed, it is very likely that he did not even remember having swallowed the wafer—lest the angry father, in the damages he could have recovered, should bankrupt us all.

And thus the matter went on. Wise doctors, attracted from all over the kingdom, as much by the unusual nature of the case as by the father's purse, were nonplussed. They had never seen or heard of anything like it. And this was something of the nature of the case: At any time, any organ in his body (except the heart and lungs) his stomach, liver, kidneys, bladder, etc.; or any muscle, *nerve*, vein or pore (but to a lesser extent) was liable to sudden cessation of function, always followed by a period of abnormal activity. But strange to say, none of the perverse organs would continue their vacation until death ensued. Yes, the essence of the sapient, fatal wafer had been carried to every organ, muscle, nerve and vein in the body; infusing into them independence and individuality, instead of subserviency. The brain, the monarch of the

man, had lost its supremacy, and had become merely a servant among servants. But fortunately, or unfortunately, the enlightened members knew to about what extent their periods of perverseness could be carried and death not ensue.

And thus, at one time, the poor boy's skin, during a siesta of the liver, would become yellow as gold. While at another, the stomach would not digest a particle of food, and he would begin to lose flesh. Again, his brain *would* think, but his tongue would not speak; and so his thoughts accumulated. Another time, his legs would refuse to support him, or he would be unable to raise his hand. And thus he lived for twenty years, at no time during which period were all the organs of his body performing their proper functions. After a few years of fruitless and expensive doctoring, he quit trying any medicines, and calmly submitted to his fate.

But at last a remedy was thought of, and that, too, by the very men who had wrought his misfortune. Why not administer another tablet? It may seem strange, but it takes just twenty years for a valuable idea to mature. We invited the strangely afflicted fat man to come to the academy, as we thought we could benefit him; and, after considerable persuasion, he complied. We induced him to take our remedy. This time we administered the wafer of the Infallibility of the Human Reason, and this time three fragile professors held the candidates' heels in the air until the tablet had time to operate. And now behold the triumph of science, such science as is taught and practiced in the acad-

emy of Lagado! The remedy was a complete success. The brain (the man) was reinstated in its sovereignty, and its belligerent subjects were subdued. But more, the subjugated members, seeing no hope of their tincture of wisdom ever again being sufficient to rebel against the reinforced brain, determined to employ it in the performance of their so-long-neglected functions. And such was the result, that when I left the kingdom, some nine months ago, the once fat boy and afflicted man had the reputation of being one of the most healthy and clear-minded men in the country .

After it was all over, and the man had been restored to more than his normal condition, we, the professors of the academy, published a true and complete account of the entire affair. Well, we had the pardon of almost everyone, including the man himself, but there are still some few old cranky foggies in remote parts of the country who blame us. And this little story is all I can suffer to run past the paws of my watchful oath concerning the many-marvelled academy of Lagado, where I spent so many pleasant years. Indeed, I was allowed to leave the country only in consideration of the long lease of service I had served therein.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

Beside the long, white road the Haunted House,
A thing of terror stands; neglected now.
And in the yard, inclosed by rotten pales,
Black poisonous weeds in wild profusion grow;
And to decay the Haunted House has come;
And yet done no man good, but many harm.
For far across the country side its fame
In all hearts holds, and rumor says that here,
The spirits of the dead convene again;
Yea, that it is a very muster-place
And rendevous for earth-returning manes.
And many and various are the pranks they play.
The murderer kills his victim here again;
The ruined maiden to her lover prays,
And still in vain, and slaughters then herself.
And many a terror-telling shriek is heard,
And dismal, ghastly, murder-muffled cry.
And then sometimes it takes a festal form;
The infernal orgies all are acted o'er;
And hellish mirth the hollow echoes wake.
And such a reputation bears the house

Among the simple souls, that no one dares
To lift his foot the fatal threshold o'er,
And stay the night.
    And is this so; and do
Souls, from the earth untimely hurled, return,
Seeking for justice, to the Haunted House?
Or has a loose board, sighing in the wind,
Or half-starved *rattons,* gamb'ling in the dark,
By man's imagination magnified,
Caused all the ado?

AN INFERNAL DREAM.

Even from the first quickening of intelligence in the mind of Sabul Gules, an abnormal part of his attention had been given to trying to find out how affairs are conducted in the lower regions. Every word connected with infernal mysteries, Greek, Latin or English, had for him a peculiar charm. While he was yet of very tender years, he used to pore with fiendish relish over the dictionary definitions, and the mythological accounts, of every word, person and incident relating to Tartarean history. And when he grew older, though still young, following the call of his irresistible fascination, he greedily devoured all poetic accounts of it. Milton's flame-lapped treatise first fell under his eye, and he thought it unapproachable; but later on he was of course obliged to admit that the Hadean impression left by Homer and Virgil, though not perhaps so fierce, was more deeply poetic. And, still later, he was constrained to confess that the fire of the Hell-wandering Dante distances them all. He studied and compared the ideas of all peoples, from the most remote to the most modern, about

posthumous punishment, and could scarce decide which best agreed with his own. But, strange to say, with all his relish for knowledge of the unseen, the welfare of the people in the other place never troubled him for a moment. His parents had with grief noted this quenchless thirst for perditional history in their son, and were casting about for some remedy.

One evening as he was sitting for a few more breaths of the balmy night breeze before retiring, having just bathed his feet after a day's plowing, being a farm boy, and thinking as usual of Nastrand, Avernus, etc., a bright idea suddenly struck him. Indeed, it struck him so forceably that it raised him to his feet, and he could scarce refrain from making his pleasure audible. And this splendidly luminous conception merely consisted in his remembering an old saying he had heard to the effect that anyone who goes to sleep without emptying the vessel of the water in which they had washed their feet, would dream of the Devil. Half angry at himself for not having thought of it sooner, he determined to try it; not that he had never dreamed of the Devil, but because dreams of that nature could not come too often. Leaving, therefore, the ebon liquid (if the solids did not preponderate) he went immediately to bed. But his excitement over the prospect of an *infernal dream* kept him for awhile awake.

Two or three days after the incident above recorded, Sabul attended a barbecue. More than once he had decided not to attend the merry making, his head was aching so terribly, but he had promised

some friends to meet them there, so he went to keep his word. But when he arrived at the scene of the broil, not a friend could he see, nor indeed a single person that he knew. Not that he was there alone, for there were countless myriads present; in fact, a much larger crowd than he had ever seen before at a barbecue or anywhere else. But not one that he knew. Sabul might have marvelled not a little at this, but he had not time to do so; wonder followed wonder so closely that he had not space to be amazed at one, before another was upon him. In the first place, the men and women (he observed no children) at the great roast were unlike any he had ever seen before. In fact, they were mere skeletons; the very persons, Sabul thought to attend a barbecue. And then the smoke! Sabul had expected to see some smoke; but the thick, black clouds that arose from the thousand pits of roasting meat actually hid the sun, and wrapped the entire scene in a close, ill-smelling vapor.

Through this hideous mist the ghastly, skeletal ghosts of men and women were rushing like mad. At first Sabul thought of returning home, but his curiosity to stay and find out if possible what it all meant conquered him. With this end in view, he plunged into the mad, rushing crowd. The first thing that attracted his attention was a man with a basket on his arm, yelling "ham sandwiches!" Seeing everyone else eating, Sabul thought he might as well follow the fashion. So he called to the man, who came to him, gave him a sandwich, and turned away without taking the proffered coin. Surprised

at this, but not beyond the point of eating, Sabul raised the refreshment towards his mouth, and was just about to sample it, when he noticed something unusual in the appearance of the slice of meat. He hastily removed the top slice of bread, and oh horror of horrors! the slice of meat was a nicely-browned human hand. In disgusted haste, he dropped the eleemosynary viand, and gave close heed to the cry of the receding distributer. Instead of "ham sandwiches" he was carying "hand sandwiches."

Sabul now determined to see what was being cooked in the earth ovens. He approached one and gazed down into the horrible depths, and oh, sickening sight!. There, stretched along on the black, charred rods, the body of a man was being roasted! Almost crazed at the sight, Sabul turned and fled. How far he ran he knew not, but at last he found his course barred by a wide river, the waves of which were flame-tipped. Surprised at this sight, Sabul managed to gasp out to a bystander: "What river is that?" "The Styx," replied the stranger, with a look of infinite wonder at the questioner. Sabul looked across to the opposite shore; there, dimly seen through the mists, the ghostly processin still surged onward. He looked down the stream, and saw a strange kind of suspension bridge, over which the ghastly crowd was treading on each other's heels in their eagerness to get across the fatal river. "What is that?" he asked of the bystander, pointing towards the novel bridge. "The bridge of monkeys," his informant replied, his wonder increasing. Here Sabul's infernal learning came

in. "But I thought that Charon carried the souls of the departed over the Styx," he said, looking keenly at his aerial companion. "So he did," the Shade replied. "But Charon is getting old, and the hosts that rush here during the 'lonesome latter years,' especially through the holidays, were entirely too much for him, and the bridge of monkeys had to be resorted to." Having said which, the Shade, with a parting look at Sabul, turned away. A bridge of roasted monkeys across the Styx!

Feeling his thirst of infernal secrets to be quenched, Sabul turned to leave the place. But alas, which way should he go? He was lost! The place was so vast, and the multitude so numberless, that it bewildered him. Seeing a party drinking and making merry around a bubbling fountain, Sabul turned his steps toward them, intending to seek information. As he approached, one who stood near the fountain, and whose duty semed to be to serve out the drink, dipped up a cup of the liquid and offered it to him. Sabul took the proffered cup, and was just raising it to his lips, when he saw a mantle of pale flame playing over the contents. "Burning alcohol!" said Sabul, as he let the cup fall. The warm beverage of Hades! Yet all around him everyone, the women especially, were quaffing it with avidity. Sabul now determined either to get out of the place, or farther in. But he had scarce taken a dozen steps when he was again stopped. His progress was cut off this time by no river, but by a crowd of angry looking ghosts, as the leader of whom Sabul recognized his informant of a few

moments before. At sight of him the Shade began to cry out: "There he is; there is your fleshly intruder into the mysteries of Hades! Seize him!" In an instant Sabul was secured, and yet he felt no weight of a hand on his arm, only a kind of compelling influence that made him go wherever it would.

In a few minutes they came to an ensanguined block, with a bloody ax lying beside it. His informant spoke again: "Here is the place, young friend, where you are to render yourself worthy the society of spirits, by disposing of your body." Another ghost, with a hideous mask on his face, took up the bloody ax, and all stood aside as if expecting Sabul to lay his neck on the block. And this Sabul was just about to do, when a low whisper in his ear caused him to turn his head and there, oh anguish and agony! at his very elbow stood his own darling girl, his own sweet Annie Short! With the most devine smile in the world she calmly said to him: "I saw you coming here and I followed, to save you if I can, if not, to die with you." The appearance of Annie caused Sabul to pause on his way to the block. The blood-thirsty spirits looked to see what caused the delay in the execution and noticed that the girl also was in the flesh. Whether from motives humane or brutal can never be told, but at any rate some ghost cried out: "Let the girl die first." And, as if impatient at the reluctant manner in which she was complying with the command, he, likely not having been dead long himself, and the instincts of

the flesh still in him, attempted to seize her by the arm.

This was more than flesh and blood could endure, and Sabul was still flesh and blood. With a blow of his fist he sent the officious ghost flying through the smoky sky as if he had been a bag full of hot air. Sabul then put himself on the defensive in front of Annie for the next spirit that should take up the quarrel. But it was useless, for the stroke had also served to shatter the clammy fetter of the nightmare; and his parents, sitting in the dark room occupied by their son, as he turned in bed and sought the repose of his other side, heard him say, "my! but I've had an infernal dream!"

But Morpheus in shaping the above dream had other assistants besides Icelus, Phobeter, Phantasus and the dirty water. For Sabul's parents had overhead his exclamation of delight, and, after he was asleep, had gone into his room to find out if possible the cause. Seeing the foul water and knowing their son's failing, they had devined all. They also decided to have a hand in the game. Having read or heard of the terrible effect produced by allowing water to fall, drop by drop, on the brow of a sleeping person, they determined to try it, hoping that the effect might render more awful the dream of their son. They did try it, not using, however, the inky fluid in which the pedal lustrations had been performed, and the above described offering of Oneirus came from the Ivory Gate as a result. And I have heard that it had the effect desired by the

experimenters, and that Sabul has now turned his attention to the acquisition of celestial lore.

AT THE END OF THE VISTA.

Once on a time, through a dark, gloomy wood,
Three travelers, a poet, minister,
And their hunter-guide, did chance to pass.
And as they went around on every side
They cast their eyes, but most of all, adown
The long, leaf-curtained vistas loved to gaze;
And as they looked, each thus, in turn, beheld:
As round on every side, before, behind,
His foilage-piercing eyes the hunter turned,
How much he saw that his companions missed,
And never dreamed of! but only of the eye;
For as his quick and penetrating glance
Pierced through the gloom, nor plume nor fur escaped,
Nor form of bird or beast, however screened,
If but an ear were bare; the forest folk,
Had they but known how little it availed,
Their umbrageous shelter, I almost believe,
Would have forsaken, and stood forth to view.
But not an image did this mind supply,
With these, to people the dim forest aisles.

Behind the hunter came the minister,
And he, too, closely peered on every side;
As if he would the forest's secrets pierce.
But oh, how different he beheld the scene!
'Tis true that to his kind old eyes, unused
To piercing the dim caverns of the wood,
Whatever choose, of the wild life lay hid.
But in their stead, imagination poured
A strong and constant stream of images,
That acted life-like on the leaf-strewn stage.
Thus at one time a band of martyred men,
Who died for truth, would stand beneath the trees;
Another, some strange rite or ceremony,
Borrowed from religion's infancy,
And savage men, perhaps, would be performed;
Another time, the Passion was reviewed;
And still, in evanescent glory draped,
Apepared a vision of the great white throne,
With Christ enthroned, and angels standing 'round.
Last came the poet. He with kindling eye
The scene surveyed, and from it took his cue:
And ne'er a glinting plumage did he see,
Or glimpse of restless fur among the leaves,
But his imagination dressed it up
As glance at passing fairy, elve or faun.
And thus his facile fancy reproduced
All the wood-folk that e'er man's fancy made.
Great Pan and all his hairy-legged kind
Appeared. Next, in some glade perhaps, he'd see
Cisseta, Coran, Draco and Echnobas
Tearing the stag-changed Actaeon; as away
Pale Dian walked beside her dappled fawn.

Or sometimes would be gently muse upon
Some poet's words, inspired by scenes like these;
Written perhaps a thousand years ago,
And which unto this distant day have stood,
Cast in the mould of immortality.
And thus it is, o'er all the plain of life;
And at the vista's end no two, perhaps,
See the same scenes in fancy's shimmering glow.

THE DISCONTENTED PEBBLE.

The Pebble was not large, but its discontent was. Indeed, it was about as small as a pebble well could be, not to degenerate into that inferior species known as gravel, while its dissatisfaction was about as large as anything, animate or inanimate, ever entertained. And what was the cause of this unpleasant state of affairs. Everything.

There was not a single condition that affected the Pebble with which it did not disagree. In the first place it was thoroughly disgusted with its diminutive stature. If it *had* to be a pebble, why had it not been made a large one? Or, why had it been made a pebble at all? It would rather have been anything else. Why had it not been made one of the pretty iris-tinted shells that are sometimes found on the beach, and for which the tourists search so eagerly; to be found perhaps by one of the lovely women that passed up and down the beach in crowds, and carried away to who knows where? But who ever cares for a pebble? Of course, everyone knows that the beach is the best place in the world for a

pebble, but this little non-content would rather have been any place else, or thought it would. It was irked by the daily soaking and buffeting of the tide, and all during its submersion it was in mortal terror lest it should be covered up, being so small. And if one tide should leave it in such a position that it could see something, the next was sure to undo all, and leave it in some depression, so surrounded by mammoths of its kind that often it could scarce get even a glimpse of the sky. The hot sun blistered it and the cold nights of winter chilled it through, though it was never cold enough to freeze anything. It was in constant terror lest some passerby should press it down into the sand with his foot, whence it could never hope to emerge. In a word, it was fretted and irritated by everything, nothing pleased it, and it did not believe that any change could possibly be for the worse.

As it lay one day thinking as usual of nothing but the hardness of its lot, it saw a fish-hawk rise heavily out of the water, its prey in its talons. Now of all things the little Pebble had wanted to be a bird of some kind, capable of motion of its own accord, and not obliged to be in one spot till something else moved it; and then it could have soared away and found out what kind of stuff it was that made the eternal whiteness of the high hills beyond. But as it watched the fish-hawk, it saw another bird, one that never fished itself, but that always robbed the other of its catch whenever it tried, swooping fiercely down on the home-flying fisherman. Fierce was the conflict, for the fish-hawk, though the

smaller bird, was no coward, and had no intention of giving up its lawful prey to the courageous drone without a struggle, though it was always beaten. As the fight continued the fish-hawk released its hold on its prey and the fish fell to the ground, and it alighted squarely on the little Pebble. The drone no sooner saw the fish, the cause of the aerial battle, falling toward the earth, than he paid no more heed to his antagonist, but swooped after it, while the other went back to the sea to catch another fish. And when the drone raised his loot off the ground, behold, the viscid slime on its scales held the little Pebble prisoner; and thus as the bird steered aloft its wish for motion was being gratified in a manner of which it had never dreamed.

And now did its discontent cease? No; for I would have you note that from the very instant when its memory-long desire began to be realized, its discontent, instead of ceasing, grew tenfold worse; or, better, it turned into fright and terror. Its hold on the fish was but slight and it feared every instant that it should break; and if break it did, the poor Pebble, never having been off the ground before, dared not think what would be the consequence. On, on, flew the bird, and the air whistled around the poor Pebble, and colder and colder it grew. They were flying over the white-mantled hill and the air was colder than the Pebble had ever felt before. Oh, how it longed to be back on the old familiar beach once more, and how it realized, when it was too late, that it was the best place in the world for a pebble, and how it vowed

that if it should ever get back there again it would never more be discontented.

But all in vain! On, on flew its conductor. They were now passing over the very crest of the white mantled hill, when snap! the Pebble came loose from the bird and began to fall! fall! But strange to say it did not alight on the white, for as it came near it saw a dark, narrow fissure crossing the white, and into this it fell. Down, down it descended, until the daylight was extinguished and the stars began to appear. At last it struck something soft, but exceedingly cold, in which it was completely submerged. And there it lies till today, in the cold and dark; the little Pebble that had all the beautiful beach for its home, and, but for its discontent, might still have had. And there it shall remain until God shall deem its expiation sufficient. And even so will God eventually put away in the darkest corner of his devine displeasure all who presume to grumble at his dispensations.

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

What means this ominous gathering in the air?
The green leaves tremble, though no breeze is felt.
But not for long suspense is entertained:
For all around,
With louring frown,
The storm comes down;
How dark, how dark, the face of nature grows!

Adown the peaceful vale
Destroying Boreas drives;
His car by night-black steeds,
In resistless fury hurled;
And gnarled and brittle alike he tears,
As with the merest puff,
The monarch of a thousand years,
From's rooted place is wrenched,
And into debris hurled.
Oh, where, alas! is gentle Zephyr now?

Upon a rising mound,
With flowers and green grass round,

The shepherd's blind daughter stands.
She hears the hideous roar,
And though ne'er heard before,
It thoughts of terror wakes;
And in the alarm of danger undefined,
Her sightless, streaming eyes to heaven she raised,
Her thin white hands she clasped above her head;
Yet not of self thought she,
As thus she prayed:
"Oh, spare my father and my father's cot,
And spare his flocks that feed within the orot;
And spare my mother and my sisters, too;
And oh! my weet pet lamb if thou'dst but spare,
And take me in their stead!"

The wild tempest was awed,
The fierce winds recoiled;
And all heaven trembled at the blind girl's prayer.
A moment in suspense the fury held,
And then dissolved the raging element;
And back to their mountain caverns,
Like chidden curs, slunk the crest-fallen winds;
And Boreas hung his head in shame;
While on, as if it all had been but play,
Passed the blind girl, gathering flowers:
Such an obstacle is innocence to rage,
And such giant power hath unalloyed prayer!

A MODERN FABLE.

Once upon a time, as the all-awakening kiss of spring, like that of a mother on the brow of her sleeping child, spread genially, with sunshine and showers, up from the Southland, its magic touch fell upon a little rose-seed that had lain for it knew not how long under some protecting leaves and earth; and the seed, at so kind a touch, began to put forth its tiny stem and roots.

At first everything went lovely, and to grow was mere joyous play; the sun was just warm enough, the mould in which its life was cast, moist, rich and loose; and the young plant revelled in the mere joy of being alive. But after awhile came times that were not so easy. There came long lapses without rain, and the nights brought no dew, and the tiny rose-bush, too, found that although the ground in which it grew was rich, yet it was no richer than it needed to be, to support the wild profusion of bushes, weeds and grass that grew in it, most all of which were stronger and hardier than the little rose bush. And at last conditions became almost

insufferable; the ground became baked dry and hard; no rain fell out of the pitiless sky; the blazing sun scorched and withered it, and the clouds of dust stirred up by the constant stream of passersby (it grew beside the road) smothered and suffocated it. Indeed, if the hard-pressed little plant had been a human being, gifted with a *higher* intelligence, it might have deemed the obstacles altogether insurmountable, and have ended its existence; but being a mere plant, it only knew to make the best of conditions, be they however adverse.

There was one thing, however, that more than anything else tended to cause the little plant to conclude its life-lot the hardest possible. Just across the road from the fence corner in which it tried to grow, was a garden of the most magnificent flowers imaginable, watched over every day by the constant care of a faithful gardener. The little plant (it could grow but slowly) sighed bitterly that its lot had not been cast in that princely paradise, where there was never any lack of moisture, and never any weeds or sprig of grass to obstruct the growth of the rightful occupants, and never any cause to dread the deracination of wanton boys, or the tread of grazing cow. But there was one custom connected with this earthly paradise, where gaily dressed ladies and gentlemen came to stroll and admire almost every day, that our plant did not relish. It was, that the gardener, the very man who tended them so carefully, often carried away from the laden bushes large basketfuls of their rich blossoms; and, strangest of all, the parents did not seem in the least to

mind having their children thus snipped away from them, perhaps because they had so many.

But our little plant felt that if it should ever bear a bloom, which it was beginning to doubt, it would feel very sorry to have anyone take it away. But at last, however, the little plant did have two buds, one of which finally opened into a rose. But it did not in the least resemble its rich, rank, hundred-petaled kinsmen of the garden. Its petals (of which there were but five) were very thin and delicate, with almost as much white as red in them. The mother of course thought it the finest rose in the world, and her envy of the better fortune of he garden flowers was all lost in love and anxiety for her own frail bloom. Luckily, however, it met with no mischance, but lived the "lease of nature," not a very long lease, to be sure; and its thin, delicate petals one by one withered up and dropped to the ground. And the mother's heart, even at this natural consummation, was wrunk with grief. But her sorrow was somewhat tempered by the remembrance that her other darling bud would soon unfold its glories; and for this she waited patiently, forgetting in the meantime all the unfavorable conditions under which she had and still labored to produce her children.

Now, it so happened that about this time the Master of the Celestial Garden needed some more rose bushes—the flowers in heaven being the same as they are on earth, and the rose being queen of her kind there even as she is here—and an angel that had never been to the earth volunteered eagerly to

go for them. He descended one splendid night, when the full moon was at the zenith of her glory, and chance destined that he should alight near the superb garden that our little plant used to envy so much.

At first, he thought he had found just what he came for, as he wandered up and down through the labyrinths of quaintly-arranged, bloom-laden magnificent bushes, and thought them fully as glorious as any he had seen in heaven. But strange to say, not a rose could he find; not that there were no roses in the garden, but because the additions and "improvements" that men have made in them rendered them unrecognizable to the angel. And so he wandered all over the garden and at last came to a halt before a bush of the nearest approach to roses he could find. But he could not persuade himself that these rich, rank, hundred-petaled things were roses. To be sure, he was conscious of a kind of beauty in them, but it was a rank, terrible beauty, which his subtile, angelic intuition warned him to shun and avoid. He obeyed the delicate warning and left the garden. As for the flowers, all during the angel's stay, they had thought him to be some nude thief; and, if they could, would have cried out an alarm, for they were not used to his kind of dress, as the ladies that came among them wore dresses that revealed only the "charms," and not the entire person.

When the angel left the garden he crossed the road in an aimless kind of way, scarce knowing where to go next, and came over very near to our little plant; and just as he was going to use his

wings once more, he happened to cast his eyes upon the ground and perceived it. Instantly he was interested and stooped down to examine the little plant, the other bud of which was now in full glory. Here, growing in neglect, was the very thing he was looking for, and he started to pull off the seed-pod, into which the first bloom had now developed. But a thought seemed to strike him. He paused. He observed that the plant had only one other blossom, and besides that it was very small; what could be the harm in carrying the entire bush to heaven? With the aid of a small stick he soon had the dry, baked earth from around its roots, and an instant later he shot aloft through the moon-litten sky, bearing the little hardy-nurtured plant, with its one rose and one seed-pod, lovingly in one hand, and with no very high opinion of the earth-born flowers.

And thus it happened the little plant that continued in the parching sun, the dry, baked earth and the choking dust, to live and make the best of things, was borne aloft to be transplanted in the fields above; while the rich, luxuriant garden flowers, tended like a princess, with nothing to do but grow and blossom, lived on in entire ignorance of the fact that they had even been visited by an angel, but continued to think of him, if indeed they thought of him at all, as merely a nude midnight thief.

THE POET'S RESPONSE.

I sent you lately a poem, Sir,
Of my living self a living part,
A fragment torn from my throbbing heart;
And you send it back to me;
But just the same,
I'll cross my legs and dream of fame,
As I have always done.

Your paper's columns are narrow things,
And to a class peculiar;
To fill them you must have poets "trained,"
Who write per string and ruler;
But my mind is as wide as the world is wise
And my soul drinks in the universe.

Thou sayest the age hates poetry,
And bid'st me scribble in prose.
I say, whenever the true poet comes,
In whatever land, under whatever sun;
Let his verse be neatly or roughly done,
So they come from the heart, and the heart be true,

Be it now, or hence a cycle or two,
He shall not lack a hearing.

For I shall still as famous be
As any in creation;
What matter whether I thank thee,
Or kind hallucination?

Thou sayest the age hates poetry,
Pray where did you get the thought?
Survey thou but the transcient throng
That now usurp the stage;
Whose work will scarce remembered be
A year when they are dead;
And yet they earn a livelihood,
While Homer "begged his bread."

Or, if I must needs rhyme, thou say'st,
"Let your lyre acquire a metallic ring,
And praise the love of gold."
Your advice may be bad, or it may be good,
But to it I'll thus reply:
Upon my mind, be it light or blind,
It some such impression makes
As the tiniest star, on the cloudiest night,
Makes on a blind man's eye.
But my heart is aflame, with the weird fire of fame,
And your puerile n. g. cannot quench it.

And yet with you I sympathize,
In your ticklish guessing job;
The public taste so wretched is,
And thine so exalted.

And now I'll take my little pet,
And scan it over slowly,
Shift a comma here and there,
Or, maybe, change the title;
And to some brother of yours then
In its new clothes I'll dispatch it;
And he, perchance, will rub his hands,
And say, "aha! but here's luck!"

And now farewell, dear editor,
For I have other patrons;
And of my call this slight mishap
I'll try to keep from rumor;
And likely visit you again,
When you're in better humor.

Farewell, thou croupier of destiny.
And oh! as down the path of life you go,
From one hand scattering fair immortal fame,
And from the other pestilential germs,
That kill young aspiration in the bud;
If e'er to surly pride you should incline,
Or vanity of power, remember this:
The cue of the learned sect that you adorn,
From history's dawn till now, hath been and is,
To heap your praise on some oblivion's bird,
At the expense of such as Racine.—Farewell!

THE SHEPHERD'S REQUEST.

On his meridian burned the golden sun,
And far and wide his shimmering beams out-flung;
Which from the level meads the shepherds drove,
To seek the bosky dell and shady grove;
Where on the wild-flowers still the dew drops stay,
And fresh and sweet the cooling breezes play.
And there were two, apart from all the rest,
Who e'en in youth and kindred minds confessed;
Nor had they changed, for still their fleecy care
Together grazed along the meadows fair.
Now, 'neath the self-same yew-tree's shade they steal,
At noontide hour to eat their mid-day meal;
The meal being done, they seek a cool retreat,
And deck the idle hour with converse sweet.

Damon.

How is it with your sweet love these fair days?
Methinks, I do not hear you sound her praise
As once you did. Can there be aught amiss
That you are now so silent upon this,

The theme wherein you late were wont to pour
The highest praises, uttered o'er and o'er?

Daphnis.

I'll tell thee, friend: Too true it is, alas,
I have not prospered as I well could wish;
Nor can I find the cause, whether she deem
My heart's sincerity is but a dream,
Or lingering memory of some former friend,
Defend the fortress that my thoughts would win,
I cannot tell; but sure it is that I
Advance but slowly, where I fain would fly.
And so, my friend, if still you would prove true,
I will in this a boon desire of you.
I'll ask you in her praise some verse to write,
Which to her listening ears I will recite.
Oh, who could ever the result foresee
When love invokes the aid of poetry!

Damon.

Why not yourself?

Daphnis.

I can, at need be, will,
But in this matter you have greater skill.

Damon.

Why, then, I'll not deny the boon you ask,
But set myself at once unto the task.
But hold! what error halts us on the brink?
Should I write now? For surely, as I think,
I have not yet observed your lady's face,

How could I then its lovely picture trace
In hues of woven verse? So now begin, and shew
How, through love's medium, she appears to you.

Daphnis.

Oh now you set me a delightful task,
When you of her a living picture ask!
But could you tear my hindering breast apart,
And see the face engraven on my heart,
You would not then need ask me to describe
A face which e'en an angel well might bribe,
To leave his starry station in the sky,
The world to try, to struggle, suffer, die.
Imprimis, then: She is not very tall,
Just reaches to my heart, but over all
Her pretty actions such a grace doth play
That added stature were but in the way.
Her hair, an auburn steeped in deeper dye,
On her fair head in woven braids doth lie,
And lustrous coils, which doth fairest show
Just where it curls around her neck of snow.
Her glorious eyes they mock the heaven's blue,
So deep, pathetic, tender, speaking, true;
And that when she is serious, when she smiles
They dance and play like elvish lights beguiled.
Her dainty cheeks the tints of twilight own;
Her nose is carved like ancient classic stone.
A perfect mouth, of fair words never drained,
Two rose-hued lips, in love's sweet honey stained;
Between which, when she speaks or smiles, is seen
The polished ivory's glinting, dancing sheen.
Her snow-white arms are softer than the fleece

From cossets shorn; what then, to judge from this,
Must be her darling bosom, seat of bliss!
And in the small pink hollow of her hand
There lies my fate, my destiny; oh friend,
There lies of earthly joy my only hope,
My spirits, this lost, in thickest darkness grope.
And now, my friend, I have described the one
That holds my soul in thrall. But by yon Sun,
I would not seek her peerless charms at all
Without the soul that moves and breathes through all.
And oh, my friend, to me she is more dear
Than is the North Star to the mariner.
It warms my heart to mention but her name,
And sends light sunshine dancing through my veins.

Damon.

And in this case you would invoke my pen,
To write the praises of so sweet a friend?
'Twere but superfluous, a labor vain
As his who lashed the billows of the main.
What *you* have said, if properly unfurled,
Would win the coyest lady in the world.

Daphnis.

But in her presence there I still am dumb.

Damon.

No; love lends eloquence to every tongue.

Daphnis.

Not so with me, when her sweet face I see

Deep-mazed I stand in mute perplexity;
My voice grows dumb, my very thoughts grow weak
My passion smothers me, I cannot speak.
But with the praises of a friend, I know
I then could speak, and should not find it so.
So, Damon, do your best.

Damon.

No, I'll not aid.

Daphnis.

Do not deny me! make the effort! try!

Damon.

You lack but courage; that I can't supply.

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